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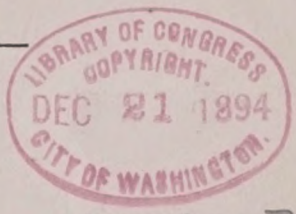
UNDER THE CORSICAN

BY

EMILY HOWLAND HOPPIN

AUTHOR OF "FROM OUT OF THE PAST," ETC.



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To

RICHARD S. GREENOUGH, Esq.

My dear Mr. Greenough:

When these pages reach you in your studio in Rome, I trust that you will read in their dedication a slight tribute of my affection, and the warm remembrance of old studio days at home.

Faithfully yours,

EMILY HOWLAND HOPPIN.

December 1st, 1894.

UNDER THE CORSICAN.

CHAPTER I.

On a dark, wet night, somewhere about the end of March, in the year of our Lord 1804, several young men were gathered together in an upper room of a small, dingy-looking house that stood crowded between two taller ones in the now extinct Rue des Trois Canettes, which inconspicuous thoroughfare was then to be found amid the devious ways of the ever-populous Isle of St. Louis, that lies, with all its teeming denizens, within the very heart of the city of Paris. This narrow street, with many others, has long since been swept away by the march of modern improvement, and the site of its picturesque old houses is at present occupied by the new and imposing Hôtel Dieu. At the time of which we write, however, the passage was both contracted and crooked, and

many of the dwellings along its length were timber-fronted and gable-roofed, while over them all there lay an air of unarrested decay.

The time-worn building to which the attention of the reader is directed was a tavern or "cabaret," a small pot-house frequented mostly by the working people; but it was clean and neat within the mouldering walls, and an atmosphere of cheerful bustle usually animated the interior. Without, a miniature pine-tree placed above the door testified to the owner's trade, the branches, though dead and russet-colored, supplementing the words on the weather-beaten signboard that called attention both to the "Commerce de Vins" and to the hospitable intent of the "Sapin Vert." To the right of the entrance a bracket of curling iron supported a lantern, and after dark, lights twinkled also from behind the small leaded panes that looked out on to the street. A cavernous portal led to the court-yard in the rear that was perpetually encumbered with household superfluities. The inn was so squeezed between its neighbors that its lines were uncertain, and it looked as though held up by their supporting walls; and being over-topped by the greater height it appeared smaller than it really

was. The constant dripping of water that ran unchecked from a broken stone spout left streaks of green and other discoloration upon the surface of the masonry. Thus its outward appearance was not particularly prepossessing, and the low-ceiled room where the little company was assembled was plain almost to bareness.

Though the pleasant days of early spring were near at hand, the temperature on the evening in question was far more indicative of the winter season; and the pile of rain-soaked cloaks thrown carelessly over a chair in the corner of the apartment witnessed to the violence of a drenching storm.

Only a matter of urgent business or of eagerly desired pleasure could have tempted the young men to come together on such a night. They were darkly dressed, and, though much bespattered with the clinging Paris mud, there was still something in their bearing and in their general appearance that betokened a higher station in life than was in keeping with their present simple, not to say penurious, surroundings. Had the condition of their finances warranted it, they would have undoubtedly sought a more luxurious

trysting-place, and we might have looked for them successfully in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, that haunt of the truly aristocratic; but the wheel of fortune has brought about strange things in its revolutions, and Anatole d'Harcourt, in whose room the meeting took place, was by no means the only scion of the old nobility who was forced to content himself with very humble quarters.

The modest hostelry in the Rue des Trois Canettes was kept by one Amand Gourtain, who had been formerly a valet in the service of the old Marquis d'Harcourt, Anatole's father; but when the Revolution came, sweeping everything before it in a whirlwind of destruction, the nobleman lost his head and the servant his comfortable home at about the same time. The latter, however, having a mind of great adaptability as well as a thrifty soul, perceived that there were many fragments to be picked up from out of the wreck, and he forthwith adjusted his political creed to existing necessities, and by watching his opportunities managed so well that circumstances favored him, and he was now doing a very pretty business as inn-keeper almost within the shadow of Notre Dame. He knew how to trim his sails to every

wind, and he understood perfectly how to take up life just as he found it. Being a person of fickle moods, the "Ça ira" of the Revolution and the "Paris en vaudeville" of Ange Pitou, the popular singer, found an equal response in his mobile nature; and just as he had given his devoted service to the nobility in the past, and as "citoyen" his adherence to the bloody upholders of the Reign of Terror, he now, in the last days of the Consulate, was above all else a Bonapartist,—turncoat of course; but withal so genial and so plausible that a speedy forgiveness was ever forthcoming for his delinquencies.

Balancing his position with nicety, he had always been above reproach among the Republicans, and had yet managed from time to time to extend assistance to the family of his old master, which had fallen into dire extremity, but which still lived upon a corner of the old estate in Brittany, occupying a tumble-down stone house and existing upon a microscopic income.

Whenever Anatole came to Paris he gladly descended at the Sapin Vert, for he was sure of finding there not only a welcome, but a good omelette and a pair of clean sheets as well; and Maitre

Gourtain was singularly forgetful in the matter of presenting accounts.

Possibly, too, Anatole's vanity was titillated by the obsequious manner with which he was served; and it was certainly most gratifying to be waited upon as a gentleman should be. His clothes were carried away at night and were returned in the morning well brushed, and his linen was not only looked over and mended, but it was also when washed, starched and ironed to the last degree of perfection. It was far from displeasing also to have his hot water handed in by the pretty Gabrielle, Amand's daughter; and when the young man was shaved, his host performed the important function himself while she stood by and held the shining copper "bouillotte." Thus it will be seen that ease and comfort were not altogether lacking even within the unpretending interior of the inn known as the "Green Pine-tree."

The room in which the party gathered on that inclement night, though bare, was clean and decently furnished, and a porcelain stove did its best to temper the air and to overcome the draughts that caused the candles to sputter and run. The wind and rain howled and beat against the ill-fit-

ting windows, and the raw chill of the Parisian atmosphere penetrated the apartment and caused the inmates to shiver as they sat about the table on which stood a light repast beside a couple of flasks of wine and a pack of cards.

But though Anatole's hand lay on the dice-box the young men were not playing, for their minds were occupied with a game of a widely different sort. As they listened to the storm raging furiously without, the draught drew up the chimney so well that the flames roared behind the brass-bound doors of the china stove; and, in the gloom of the dimly lighted room, the party drew closer together about the deal boards. Dismay and sorrow were written on their faces as they discussed in lowered tones the lamentable death of the young Duc d'Enghien, the last hope of the Condés, that had but lately taken place,— a judicial murder at which the whole civilized world was to stand aghast. It was therefore no wonder that these young men, all patricians though miserably poor, should have been deeply moved by the cruel injustice of his fate, and have resented as an insult to their own caste the arbitrary fiat that had arrested and finally brought him to his death.

"Ha!" cried Anatole angrily as his hand closed firmly over the unoffending cards. "He has been made a victim to Bonaparte's inexorable will. By all the laws of equity, his freedom should have remained inviolate beyond the frontier."

And Anatole was right. As his fingers clinched and his eyes flashed, a quick response came to him from the others. Muttered oaths and dark threats were uttered, and one of the party, a mere lad, started to his feet and flung his gentleman's sword upon the table so that the good steel quivered and rang as it fell. "I am ready!" he cried, then sank back abashed to his seat as he met the other's quick glance.

"Peace, Raoul," he said, fixing him with a look that made the boy quail. "Here craft boots as much as steel. A rash act may ruin everything. 'All comes to those who know how to wait,'" he added, quoting the proverb. "The murderer shall be hunted down, and vengeance sure and unrelenting shall find him out. Trust me, and I will lead you."

As they looked at each other across the poor deal table their pale faces and trembling lips appeared ghastly in the dim light, and each one of

the little company lived through again in thought the fateful night that had blotted the fair world from d'Enghien's eyes and had ended in blood beneath the dark walls of Vincennes.

At this late date it is hardly worth while to repeat the tale, for the whole world knows how the unfortunate man was seized at the castle of Ettenheim in the Grand-Duchy of Baden, and hastened from thence to Vincennes. The arrest was made upon suspicion only, and adequate proof of his complicity in the plots endangering the First Consul's life was never forthcoming; but an example was demanded, and though he denied all knowledge of the Chouan Cadoudal's movements, he admitted having been in Strasburg once or twice, and upon the strength of this alone the law effecting the "émigrés" bearing arms against France was put in force to his perdition. Tried and condemned at night, he was executed without delay. His death remains a dark blot upon Napoleon's career. It was never justified even by those nearest to him, and posterity has taken even a harsher view than they did.

In vain the beautiful Josephine had pleaded; in vain Hortense, Louis Bonaparte's wife, had added

her entreaties. The First Consul was obdurate. "*Laisse moi ; tu n'es q'une femme ; tu n'etnends rien à la politique*," he said to the first. When the Second Consul Cambacérès advocated clemency, he received for a reply: "*Vous êtes devenu bien avare du sang des Bourbons.*" Therefore, the unhappy Prince was hastened to his doom, and the very soldiers who carried out the sentence were so much touched by the courage with which he died that they refused afterwards to rifle the corpse, although they had full permission to do so. The body, still clad in its uniform, was laid in an unconsecrated grave and hastily covered with earth; and before the morning sun arose the tragedy was completed and all trace of it removed.

When you drop a stone into a pond and watch the widening circles, they soon disappear; but has it occurred to you that long after they are lost to sight they are in reality increasing until they break in a wash against the confines of the water? Events that move all parties with sudden and intense feeling also leave a wake behind them. Young d'Enghien's melancholy fate thrilled all hearts, even those to whom he was politically opposed, and among his own friends there were those

who became not only saddened but desperate. Though Moreau and Pichegru had been arrested, and the authorities were in hot pursuit of Georges Cadoudal, the Chouan leader, the enemies of Bonaparte were not discouraged, and there was one more widening circle on the sea of daily events that was silently advancing to break against the political shore.

Anatole d'Harcourt was at the head of the new conspiracy; and as he brooded over his plans and watched the course of events in France, all his racial prejudices were intensified. Profoundly disgusted with the growing power of the popular government, his animosity was fed as fire is with oil when the news of the Duke's treacherous arrest and unjustifiable execution reached him. Among his closest friends were two young Royalists whose homes had been wrecked in the Revolution, and whose eyes were in no wise dazzled by the nation's increasing glory and prosperity. They were animated by an almost fanatical hatred of Bonaparte; and though the quasi court of the Consulate was already frequented by many of even nobler blood than their own, they held haughtily aloof. Now their deepest indignation was aroused,

and, stirred by what had taken place, they were ready in their excitement to act the part of desperate men. D'Harcourt became the leading spirit, and inspired by a temper of absolute recklessness, these three formed a new plot, the immediate object of which was to avenge d'Enghien's death by assassinating the First Consul, while their ultimate desire was to facilitate the return of the white flag and the royal lilies of France. They met at night in Anatole's rooms to formulate their still indefinite schemes; and carried away by their emotion and intoxicated by the fervor of their purpose, they were apt to talk themselves into a white heat, garnishing their conversation with high-flown Latin quotations, and drawing examples both from antiquity and from more modern times.

They considered that the title of "First Consul for Life" was but a thin veil to disguise Bonaparte's real ambition; and it seemed to them a sacrilege that an upstart military leader should dare to cast his eyes towards the throne of St. Louis, even though he was the hero of many victories, and his firm hand on the helm of state was leading their country forward to a great place

among the nations of the earth. Embittered by the sense of loss sustained by those of their own rank, they took it upon themselves to become the instruments of France's social and political regeneration by removing the modern Cæsar; and they forgot that assassination is always base murder even when accompanied by purest love of country, and that they also were moved by personal considerations. Moreover, the old order of things had been swept away forever, and the mighty hand of the Corsican was already reconstructing society as well as politics upon an entirely new basis.

As the conspirators sat together that stormy night they looked out into the future through eyes that were blinded to its tremendous possibilities, and they were intent alone upon what their own puny attempts might accomplish. Anatole d'Harcourt was the only one of the three whose motives were in any sense redeemed by the unselfishness of his purpose. Devoted to his cause, he believed in the unfortunate fallacy that the end often justifies the means, and throwing himself with his whole soul into what he regarded as a duty to his exiled king, he was ready to sacrifice himself en-

tirely rather than to fail;—and this the others were not.

The young men who formed the group about the table were all very fair representatives of their class. Careful in their appearance, they were attired in clothes that, though somewhat worn, were essentially those of aristocrats; and their grace of manner and their polished politeness betrayed a school of good breeding and courtliness that has never become extinct in France. Their surroundings were humble, but the party was composed of men who were pre-eminently gentlemen.

D'Harcourt was on his feet as he expounded his plans, and his companions listened to him intently. He was tall and imposing in appearance, his gestures were graceful, and his voice was well modulated and firm. Presently he broke off in what he was saying and began to inveigh against the government.

"Are we dogs, that we can be shot down thus?" he asked. There was a moment of silence before he continued: "He who commands such things to be done in the name of justice is a red-handed tyrant!"

"And yet this Bonaparte has lately accomplished

something for France," observed the man directly opposite him. "He has at least brought back *la sainte* religion. The churches stand open once more, and our country is no longer pagan. Chateaubriand even dedicates his 'Génie de Christianisme' to the conqueror of Italy. The days of Voltaire and of Rousseau are over."

The speaker, Raoul de Boissy, was a young fellow of twenty or thereabouts. He had delicate, almost feminine features, and dark hair and eyes. His long white fingers played nervously with the ruffles in his sleeve. He was as yet unstained with crime, and he shrank from committing the awful deed they were contemplating, though he never wavered in his desire that some one else should do it. Perhaps a lingering sense of right and wrong warned him that good can never come of evil, and he was therefore less self-poised and assertive than his leader.

Anatole sneered as he answered, "Bonaparte knew well enough that by restoring religion he would win the support of the people. It was a fine policy in truth! Do you believe that his republican generals are Christians? When the Te Deum was sung in celebration of the Concordat

two years ago at Notre Dame, the First Consul drove his officers to their positions about the high altar with the same authority that has sent them into battle. There was no faith in their hearts. When the Host is lifted they kneel and bow their heads, but the salute is the result of discipline. Art thou weakening, Raoul, in thy determination?"

De Boissy shook his head, and Anatole went on: "Poor d'Enghien lies sweltering in his bloody grave, and his beloved, the young Princess Charlotte de Rohan, has naught but his little dog to comfort her. They tore the faithful beast away from his master's dead body, and they sent it to her with a lock of the Duke's hair that he had clipped for her himself." The speaker's eyes flashed and his voice grew hoarse with emotion. "Blood calls for blood," he exclaimed. "Napoleon Bonaparte must die. *Sic semper tyrannis!*" He lifted his hand and brought it down so heavily upon the table that it trembled, and he looked about him defiantly.

"Where you lead I follow," said Jules de Montfort bluntly. "May the Holy Mother protect us!"

"It is the part of patriots to save their country in the best way they can," said Raoul. "If nec-

essary, I will strike the blow with my own hand. Mayhap the saints will consider that all means are good when employed to serve the king. I wear this constantly for protection." He pulled out a small reliquary that hung from a chain that was hidden among the ruffles at his breast.

"Tyrants and usurpers must ever die!" said Anatole in his low, firm tones. "It is the law of nature. Cæsar found his Brutus; Henri III. his Clement; even Henri of Navarre a Ravaillac."

"And yet Henri was the 'bon roi,' the darling of the people," objected Raoul.

Though at one as regarded the main purpose of their plan, the plotters held different opinions as to the manner of its accomplishment; consequently nothing had been done. Anatole was in favor of prompt and uncompromising assassination, while Raoul inclined more to the project of Pichegru and Cadoudal that aimed to seize the First Consul bodily, only resorting to his death if forced to in the struggle. De Montfort agreed with d'Harcourt, but preferred the use of poison to that of firearms.

How little they all knew, and how futile are the plans of man! Destiny accomplished his final de-

struction without their aid. Had the conspirators been able to look a few years in advance they would have stood both amazed and aghast, for the conqueror's ambitious schemes were to wreck himself and France; though when he came at last to die alone upon his solitary rock in the ocean he had made his peace with God, and the world was satisfied. They knew nothing of what was to come, and intent only upon their own plot, talked of casting lots to decide which of them should be the one to undertake the dark deed.

In the gloomy upper room there was but little good cheer. Even the wine in the flasks was sour, and the fire, though it roared fiercely, was of light wood and gave out but little heat. The young men shivered as the rain rattled on the windows, and the candles flickered and sent up curling spirals of evil-smelling smoke. Outside on the stairs heavy footsteps came and went, and the business of the inn progressed as usual.

"Shall we cast the dice?" said de Montfort as he slowly lifted the box. "The one who first throws a couplet wins."

"Or loses all?" muttered Raoul between his teeth.

Anatole took the box from him and rattled it, but then he laid it down again.

"Listen," said he. "We must add a fourth to our number, and I propose my most intimate friend, Count Victor d'Olonet. He has better opportunities than we have of getting near to Bonaparte's person. Moreover, he is the soul of honor and as true as steel."

"For that very reason he will not join us," said Raoul, "for he has accepted a commission in the army."

"What of that?" replied the other fiercely. "We also fight an enemy of France. I am willing to stake my life that he will accept my proposition, but we must approach him carefully at first. He has everything to gain if we succeed. The d'Olonets have always shown the greatest devotion to the royal family, and it is high time that Victor should return to their traditions, for his race has been singularly favored by Louis XVI. While in the Temple his Majesty actually wrote a line of farewell in his breviary, which his faithful attendant Cléry delivered to Count d'Olonet after the king's death, and this the family will always keep as a relic. How can my friend hesi-

tate to come to us? His father was a victim of the Revolution, and his mother and his sweet sister Antoinette are with the 'émigrés' in Germany."

De Boissy only shrugged his shoulders doubtfully; but Anatole's counsels prevailed, and a letter couched in ambiguous terms was then and there written to the proposed member, and this d'Harcourt took charge of himself.

As he placed the written words within the breastpocket of his coat he rose to his feet again and looked at the others. There was something in his bearing as he did so that awed them, they knew not why. Perhaps it was because his nature was so different from theirs that they were thrilled in spite of themselves, and were carried along on the wave of his purpose, just as the whirlwind sweeps up the chaff and hurries it on its own course. Even Raoul, who had been quick to resent a fancied affront, forgot his irritation. With d'Harcourt things went deeply. Though the passions of his companions could be aroused into a storm of fury, it was like a tempest that ruffles the surface of the sea. With him a strong emotion was an upheaval that took its birth in depths they

never dreamed of. He stood in the gloom of the upper room that night and paused, and the others waited, hanging on his words and with eyes riveted upon their chief. They knew that something must be coming.

"Comrades!" he cried at last in a low ringing tone that thrilled and swayed them. "Comrades, let us take an oath to slay the tyrant, and to defend the king, God bless him! One sword lies already there!"

He pointed to Raoul's blade, that still lay where it had fallen, and the lad looked up quickly and gratefully, more than appeased.

"Swords must not rust," continued Anatole in that low, magnetic, inspiring voice. "When the time comes, good steel must bend and strike and flash for the cause! Comrades, follow me!"

He drew his own with sudden, impetuous movement as his voice rose, and he held it high above his head while the light from the dying candle caught on its edge with a red glow. In quick response his companions' blades leaped forth from discarded scabbards, and they flashed and clanged as they crossed each other and lay together in the brotherhood of well-tempered steel. They were

gentlemen's swords drawn for their own caste and for the king!

"In the name of justice!" exclaimed the leader in that tone that was weighted with sterner meaning than any shout, and at which young Raoul's blood turned chill.

"For holy, righteous vengeance, strike!" cried Anatole; and carried away by their emotion the young men fell into position as by instinct, and the bright blades crossed, and rang, and quivered until the blue sparks flew. "We swear it," repeated the leader, and the others answered, "We swear!" as they still held their weapons aloft and the blood rushed through their veins, while eyes flashed and nerves grew tense.

"And," cried Anatole hoarsely, "with blood we will seal this bond."

The moment of elation had carried them away on the wings of an awakened enthusiam, but suddenly the sputtering candle flared up and went out, the wind and storm increased in fury, and the windows rattled, while the darkness fell over the room ominously,—and like a bad augury to Raoul, at least.

Shortly afterwards the party dispersed without

any more definite conclusion having been reached, and the prime mover in the plot was left alone.

It was late, but he could not sleep. Throwing open the door of the stove, he let the ruddy light pour forth into the room; and dropping down upon a chair before it he leaned his head on his hand and became lost in meditation. The candles burned down in their sockets and went out, and only the glow of the fire gave him any light, but he did not heed the growing darkness. Half dozing, half dreaming of a brilliant future that was to come to him as the result of a dastardly deed, he sat far into the night, unconscious of the raging elements without that vied with the tumultuous surging of the thoughts in his own breast. He was not a wicked or a cruel man by nature. A happier lot than his might have developed qualities that would have been gallant in a good cause, but he had been impoverished and embittered by a course of events that every one of his inherited instincts taught him to detest. Good feeling had been dried up at its very spring, and his qualities of daring and of enterprise had been perverted by his unreasoning faculties into criminal desires.

CHAPTER II.

When pretty Gabrielle Gourtain knocked on Anatole's door the next morning, she thought her father's lodger would never wake; but when she heard him stir at last, she turned and ran down quickly to her mother in the kitchen and begged her to hasten and prepare Monsieur's chocolate at once, for he hated to be kept waiting and she knew that he would ring for it soon.

Anatole had in truth slept late, but he had heard the city bells chime four o'clock before he had gone to rest; and even after he had cast himself down in utter weariness upon his bed, his mind had continued to be so overwrought and perplexed that it was long before oblivion had come to sooth him. At last, however, his heavy eyelids had closed and he had lost himself in a refreshing slumber that had remained quite undisturbed until he was aroused by the timid tap on his door. His first exclamation was one of impatience, but when he heard the voice outside bid-

ding the servant to heat water and to bring another log for the stove, he smiled, for he knew perfectly well to whom the silvery tones belonged. Despite the dark workings of his thoughts, he was by no means proof against the charms of a pretty face, and the attractive daughter of his host had always stood high in his favor. Besides, he had known Gabrielle since her earliest childhood, and he had been wont to regard her somewhat in the light of a pet and a plaything during his visits to the *Sapin Vert.* She was so fresh and winning, and her hands and feet were so ready in his service, that she had always seemed to him, even in the old days, as the perfection of a miniature handmaiden; and he had promised her repeatedly that when she was fully grown he would bestow upon her a box of trinkets which was to be laid aside against her wedding-day. This had been regarded by both of them as a fine joke; and whenever he arrived from the country, he never failed to ask if the time had come when he was to look about for the marriage gift.

But Gabrielle had shot up wonderfully since he had last been in Paris, and somehow the old joke had lost its zest. In the place of the little girl he

had romped and played with he now found a young woman who possessed both a neat figure and a pretty face, and whose head had a most coquettish poise, though she could look down demurely enough when she chose; and she constantly dropped the most fascinating of deferential curtesies. Six months had wrought a great change, and it looked as if the time were really near when he might be called upon to redeem his promise. As he heard the light step outside his door that morning, and listened to the tones of her voice as she gave orders for his comfort, he laughed softly to himself. "The little minx is charming enough to win whoever she likes," he reflected, "and it is a pity that she should be wasted upon some greasy innkeeper or tradesman. I wager that old Gourtain will make a good match for her according to his own ideas," he went on, pursuing the same train of thought as he turned over once more, "for the rascal is as sly as a fox and always makes a fine bargain. I should hate to see the thing done; but, *foi de gentilhomme!* when it comes to that, if I have to sell my sword to raise the gold, she shall have a good gift from me on her wedding-day! In the mean time we must secure those

buckles I saw at the silversmith's on the quai last night."

It must be said of Anatole that he was as generous and free-handed as though he had anything to spend; and he flung his largess about him in a positively regal manner whenever he chanced to have a few spare écus in his pocket. He might overlook such trifles as outstanding bills, but in the matter of easy giving he was not to be outdone. Gabrielle knew something of this, and though the promised trinkets had not as yet been forthcoming, sundry gay handkerchiefs and ribbons of lesser value had found their way into her hands, and she had never been averse to receiving them.

When Amand shaved Anatole that morning, she had come as usual, and had stood beside her father holding a clean towel and a jug of warm water. The thick lather was hardly becoming, but even the soapsuds could not altogether disguise the outlines of d'Harcourt's well-moulded chin, and when his clear-cut features were entirely freed from the white covering that hid the lower half of his face, she looked on approvingly and permitted herself to smile. The innkeeper also attended to his guest's hair which was still worn in a cue; and

the tonsorial operations always took place in the open common-room of the tavern. The cooking went on in the rear, and the customers were served on small tables that stood upon the sanded floor in front. Behind the zinc-covered counter over which Gourtain's tap-boy handed the drinks, there was a tiny fenced-in corner where stood a desk; and it was in this reserved space that the ex-valet attended to his distinguished patron in the intervals between waiting upon newcomers and regulating the accounts in his ledger.

When Anatole saw Gabrielle smile, he smiled back, and then he arose and flung away the towel that was tucked under his chin, and proceeded to saunter forth in an altogether easy and lordly fashion. He did not even thank his host for having performed the menial service, although he knew himself to be the only frequenter of the hostelry who received such attention. That this was ungracious never occurred to him. "It was the man's place to shave a gentleman," he would have said; "and had not Gourtain been born and brought up on the d'Harcourt estates,—*que diable?* It was there that he had learned to wait upon the nobility."

Amand bore him no grudge, and only looked pleased when he heard the young man invite his daughter to step with him around the corner to the silversmith's shop, in order that they might search there together for a perfect pair of buckles.

"I had thought of paste," said Anatole grandly, "but though they sparkle more, the silver ones will really be twice as becoming to the shape of your feet."

He dropped his hands into his almost empty pockets and carelessly jingled the few coins he found there. He was quite aware that he had not enough to pay for the more elaborate ornaments, and that even the price of the moderate ones should go instead into the money-drawer of the *Sapin Vert;* but he was counting upon a slender remittance from home, and he was eager to give Gabrielle pleasure.

His first care that day had been to dispatch his letter to Count d'Olonet, and that once accomplished his mind had turned, with its natural elasticity, to means of present enjoyment. The weather promised to be fine after the rain, and broad patches of blue sky were a good augury for unclouded sunshine later. As the couple passed along they

conversed together in the low tones of those completely at home with each other. She was pleased to be seen walking with such a fine gentleman, and it amused him to have her company. The streets were full of people who hurried along intent upon the business of the day. Workmen passed, street-venders' shrill voices proclaimed their wares; tradespeople, soberly dressed, pushed through the crowd and looked contemptuously at the gallants who, in spite of their care to avoid the puddles, often splashed their neat hose. Vehicles rumbled and rolled, and pedestrians of all sorts and conditions picked their way through the mud and jostled each other where the path was narrow. The inviting aroma of roasted chestnuts greeted their nostrils frequently, and the glowing charcoal of the braziers made points of light within dark doorways. The city had taken up its daily life, and the women of the laboring classes, grateful for the returning mildness after the chill of the night before, threw back their heavier garments and went on their way bareheaded as usual, unless coifed with muslin caps. Those from the *halles* filled the air with their cries, and often also with their fishy smell; and up and down the

river-front loungers paused to watch the horses who were being watered in the stream. As Anatole and Gabrielle progressed, the girl stepped daintily beside him. Her foolish head was quite turned by having him for an escort, and her vanity was flattered at the prospect of new finery. She knew that she was pretty, and as she caught glimpses of her trim figure reflected in the mirrors of the shop windows, she smiled and plumed herself, smoothing down her spotless kerchief, and straightening out her flying ribbons. She was a shallow little thing, but she was also light-hearted and kindly disposed. Like a child, she could be bribed to do almost anything, and Anatole knew that in her he had an unconscious instrument that could be moulded at his will. As a messenger she would be invaluable. It was quite worth while, therefore, to spend a chance gold piece for her gratification; and he found her so attractive that he was in no way averse to it when she chose to bestow a kiss upon him instead of thanks.

As they went on their way she felt for his hand from time to time, and he let her have it, treating her as though she were a child. It

pleased him to have this pretty, clinging thing beside him.

Once a young fellow passed, singing boisterously; and as he caught sight of Gabrielle stepping lightly over the unclean streets, his attention was instantly attracted.

"Pretty one," he said, as he paused and stared, "I wish that I also had so charming a companion as yourself to walk with, but I see that you have already found a fine escort, and that there is no chance for such as me!"

He laughed as he thrust his bold face forward, but flared up in anger when he felt Anatole's buffet across his cheek.

"Will you fight?" he demanded, squaring off, as his face grew hot and red.

"Gentlemen do not fight with the *canaille*," answered d'Harcourt dryly, and he calmly took out his handkerchief and wiped his hand. "It is bad enough to touch them. Go, and remember that I will see no woman under my care insulted by you."

The insolent fellow stooped to gather up a handful of mud, which he prepared to fling at Gabrielle.

"I will spoil your good looks!" he shouted.

A little crowd had gathered, but they did not applaud. They simply stood and waited, undecided whether to uphold the ruffian or the gentleman—and Anatole was equal to the occasion. Leaving Gabrielle, he stepped up to the youth and, grasping him firmly by the collar of his coat and at the waist, lifted him off the ground and seated him upon the ledge of a window overhead.

"Stay there," he remarked quietly, "where you are out of the way."

This summary disposal of an adversary turned the balance as it trembled, and the volatile Parisians greeted the prompt action with a roar of laughter. It tickled their sense of the ludicrous, and was even better than a fight.

As Anatole and Gabrielle went on unmolested, the former stooped and whispered: "Do not fear, child. You are quite safe. He who is rude to you insults me."

"Monsieur is so good and so strong," she murmured gratefully, and she looked up with a world of timid admiration in her glance. Who indeed was so gallant and masterful, so handsome and

engaging, so altogether perfect in the sight of his companion, as this proud though impecunious heir to the fallen fortunes of a family bearing one of the oldest names in France?

The small shop they visited that day was tucked away in a corner of the lower floor of a high building that was a perfect hive of tradespeople;—and once inside, they were soon occupied in turning over the contents of the showcases and drawers. Gabrielle was immensely pleased by all she found, and was only too glad to allow the silver buckles to be placed upon her shoes at once. She held back her skirt gingerly, and trod about on tiptoe to see the effect of her feet decked out with these new treasures; and after she had entirely satisfied herself with looking at them, she returned once more to admire the gewgaws that the obliging shopkeeper allowed her to ransack at will. Anatole stood by and smiled indulgently, very much as he might have done at the caprices of a spoiled and petted child.

A set of buttons caught her fancy. The steel facets were finely cut and polished, and when held up to the light reflected it almost with the lustre of diamonds. She placed the shining things

against her sleeve and she laid them on the velvet lining of a jewel-box.

"How they sparkle!" said she, smiling so that she showed her pretty teeth.

"Yes, mademoiselle, they are very beautiful," said the man. "Mme. Bonaparte came here last week and bought a set exactly like them for herself. She is a wonderfully fine lady, and a most kind patroness to the tradespeople. She has a quick eye for any novelty and she dresses like a princess."

Anatole frowned, but the merchant went on fluently as he searched for a bit of cotton wool, "And she is most gracious too, and amiable with every one. Even the Royalists flock to her salon, and she has warm friends among them. But though she lives like a queen almost, she is not at all ambitious, I hear. Times are changing! times are changing! Here is M. de Talleyrand, who gives a ball to-night, and all parties will be represented there."

"It is but three days since the Duke died!" ejaculated Anatole, "and two months ago Mme. de Talleyrand refused to attend a ball given by the Austrian ambassador on January 21st, the an-

niversary of the King's death. She was horror-struck at the inadvertence of M. de Cobentzel in having named that day. Times are changing, as you say."

"Will mademoiselle take the buttons?" asked the man, without noticing this last remark.

Gabrielle looked at Anatole and he nodded.

The merchant busied himself in wrapping them up in paper, and as he handed them over the counter, he added: "There, mademoiselle, now that you have persuaded monsieur to give you the buttons also, you will indeed be dressed like that gracious lady herself. My very heart aches for her too, for they say that she is torn with anxiety for the First Consul's life."

"Wherefore?" asked Anatole. "He is always closely guarded."

"Well," said the talkative shopkeeper, proud to show off his knowledge, "I have a friend among the household, and I hear from him that great precautions are taken. Ever since the discovery of the infernal machine extra care has been observed to secure his safety. Every one knows that the city is full of assassins, and that it has been ever since Cadoudal came back to France. The

story is that the conspirators scaled the cliff on the coast by means of a smuggler's rope, and that they are hidden away now in Paris. But, *soyez tranquille*, Bonaparte is a great man, and he will know how to protect himself. Pichegru and Moreau are already arrested; d'Enghien is dead; and that arch plotter, Georges Cadoudal, the Chouan, will also be trapped and made to pay his deserts."

"Let them first catch their fox before they attempt to sell his hide," said Anatole dryly. "The Duke's death was simply murder. He was living quietly the life of a private gentleman on his estates. If he went to Strasbourg, it was only to go to the play! Bonaparte's minions captured him, and he was laid low by their master's will."

He spoke excitedly and the shopkeeper looked up in surprise. "Monsieur is not a republican?" he asked.

"I?" exclaimed d'Harcourt, turning on his heel. "No, I am not. Bonaparte is a great man—no one can deny that—and he has saved France once, but now let him see that the throne is restored to the Bourbons, to whom it belongs. I have no faith in him, and since he has taken to shooting down

princes of the blood we might as well be in the hands of the *sans culottes* once more!" Fearing that he had said too much, he added hastily: "But I dare say all will yet go well. I hear that many of the old nobles are returning to take possession of what has been restored to them of their lands." He paused and addressed himself to Gabrielle: "Come, little one, you have bought enough." He turned his silk purse inside out. "See! for this morning I have nothing left. We will go and take a stroll in the Luxembourg gardens before we return to the inn."

Once more on the street, they threaded their way through the crowd until they reached the pathways of the gardens; and when within they established themselves on a stone seat. It would have been too cold to remain there had not the sun found its way through the still bare branches of the trees, flooding the damp alleys with its cheering warmth. The sparrows hopped about cheerfully, children ran hither and thither in their play; and the light falling on the gray stone lit up the palace and gradually dispelled the prevailing wet. There was a life-giving feeling in the air, as though spring had really come in spite of the chill that

struck one when inactive, and which was a sure menace of rheumatism.

The passing diversion of the shopping expedition being over, Anatole relapsed once more into a state of gloom that even Gabrielle's prattle could not dissipate; and after resting a while, they arose and slowly retraced their steps to the Rue des Trois Canettes. He was no longer in the humor for an outing. It is a terrible thing to bear alone the responsibility of an act involving very serious consequences; and though he had thrown off its burden for a moment, the weight of it quickly returned to oppress him. He had worked himself up to a state of exaltation the night before, but in spite of his reasoning and his fixed determination he shrank from committing the horrible deed. But Anatole had nerves of steel, and he was capable of both the devotion and the daring of a fanatic. He knew well enough that de Montfort and de Boissy were his creatures, and that though willing to follow in his lead, would hardly take the initiative in any desperate act. Words were cheap. Actions told. "Ah, if I had but Victor with me," he mused. And then came the remembrance of d'Olonet's clear, straightforward gaze, his pure

brow, and his candid nature. Something like regret filled Anatole's heart as he questioned the wisdom of having approached his friend. "He would fight an enemy face to face with the bravery of a hero, but would he soil his hands with crime?"

Anatole's face grew dark as Raoul's words came back to him, for he knew that his companion had been right. He loved Victor better perhaps than anything on earth, and he longed to have him near; but in the revulsion of feeling that was gradually creeping over him, he began to repent having done anything to draw him into his own dark scheme. "His hands are clean," thought the disaffected aristocrat. "The saints be thanked that my letter only hinted at a possible plot, but gave no clue to its real intent. I wanted to sound him first. Once, when we were mere lads together, I saved the boy's life. Shall I drag him to his ruin now? God forbid! The others are empty-headed and vaporing, and too rash to be trusted. I will do the deed myself; but when the thing is accomplished, I will turn the weapon on myself and take my own life."

Anatole might be a villain, but he was at any

rate a gentleman and could not tolerate the indignity of arrest. He looked before him sadly, and walked along in such total silence that his companion, wearied at last by his lack of conversation, pressed him to speak.

"Why has monsieur become so melancholy?" said she. "An hour ago he was as gay as a lark."

"I am thinking of one I love dearly," he answered. "That makes me quiet."

"Ah, monsieur, and is it a woman?" She clasped her hands anxiously. "Surely, monsieur, if that is so, she must be a great lady, and you will soon forget your little Gabrielle."

"No, child, I cannot tell thee who it is, but do not fear. I will always be thy friend." He looked down and saw that her lips were pouting and that crystal drops hung from her long lashes.

"And dost thou care a little for me thyself, Gabrielle?" he asked softly.

"Ah, *Dieu des Anges!*" she sighed. "How can monsieur ask? But, of course, it is a lady that he loves, and therefore the innkeeper's daughter must be forgotten." A look of jealousy filled her eyes. "It is not for what monsieur gives," she added. "It is for himself that I care. Here! take

back the buttons, and the clasps also from my shoes!"

She stooped to loosen them, but he laid a restraining hand on her shoulder. "Foolish child! What are my friends to you? Keep the toys I gave you. If I were rich, I would find you many more; and you should wear silks and velvets like a real lady."

She blushed hotly. "Does monsieur really mean that? I have never walked with a gentleman before—my father would not let me; but with M. d'Harcourt it is different," he said. She glanced up at him shyly and then added: "When M. le Marquis weds, perhaps his wife might wish to have me for her maid, but,—but I will not come!"

She stamped her foot angrily as her temper rose, but at the same time she continued to look up at him furtively, and she appeared so exasperatingly pretty in her passion as her cheeks flushed and her eyes filled with something that was not resentment alone that Anatole paused in wonder; yet he did a very foolish thing a second later when he stooped to kiss away her tears. They were quite alone. No one saw it done; and she turned quickly and caught hold of his arm, and thus

linked together they passed on, she entirely appeased, and he at first touched, but presently silent again and almost forgetful of her presence. However, he recollected it as they rounded the corner and entered the square in front of Notre Dame, and he paused to gently disengage himself. People were streaming into the great church in order to attend some one of its many services, and it would never do for a chance acquaintance to see him with a daughter of the people hanging to his arm.

The following days passed wearily, and were spent for the most part in his own room or in roaming about the city, for his conflicting thoughts would give him no rest, and he even avoided meeting his friends.

The answer to his letter arrived sooner than he had thought possible, and when he broke the seal his hand actually trembled. Danger and anxiety, where he was concerned alone, left him imperturbable, but when this friend he so dearly loved became involved, the thing was different. The first words reassured him somewhat, for they were commonplace enough and spoke of a temporary indisposition that kept the writer from calling in person; but then d'Olonet went on to

say: "I find myself for the moment in Paris, where I have returned invalided from the army. Your letter fills me with misgivings, for if the mysterious business in which you are engaged is in any way illegal, I warn you that I cannot take part in it. You know that I am at heart a Royalist, and that I would lay down my life for his Majesty the King, but at present I hold a commission in the army,—and the army is France! Our poor country has been torn by wars and dissensions; prosperity is only beginning to return to it, and the part of a true patriot is to uphold existing law and order. Our day is for the moment past: perhaps it may come again. In the meantime let us wait patiently. I fear me, my friend, that you are getting into mischief. Take care!"

According to the young aristocrat's code, the profession of arms was the only one fit for a gentleman to follow; and when influence had procured for him an opening in the army he had accepted it eagerly, believing it to be the surest road to fortune and glory. And he was not wrong, for tremendous changes were taking place daily, and there had never been a time when personal valor and intelligence bade fair to win so prompt a re-

ward. The army of France had a mighty sound in those days, and men of all stations fraternized as they filled its ranks. It was a daring act when Bonaparte called upon the Vendéens after the rupture came with England, but in spite of old traditions he succeeded in forming the survivors of Quiberon and Nantes into a legion that never betrayed its trust. Victor d'Olonet was not the only nobleman who felt that by so bearing arms for his country he could serve with dignity under the banner of the Republic. Moreover, like many others, including the exiled Louis XVIII. himself, he entertained a hope that the First Consul only held the power in trust, a fondly cherished desire that was destined to a speedy disillusion, for the man of fortune was in the full tide of his victorious course.

When Anatole finished reading his letter, the paper fell from his hands, and an unreasoning feeling of joy swept over him. Victor was true to himself, and though his determination would rob his friend of a support he had once hoped for, d'Harcourt felt immensely relieved when he knew his decision, and, added to this contradictory state of his mind, came a longing to see the boy. He

resolved to seek him without loss of time, and proposed to allay his suspicions at once, so that they might resume without restraint a companionship that had constituted one of the few joys of his own dark life. It was certainly a strange tie that bound the sunny-tempered, light-hearted Victor and the embittered Anatole together, but its root lay far back in early childhood, when they had studied and played together upon adjoining estates in Brittany. Misfortune had developed and purified Victor like finely tempered steel, and in spite of the frivolities of inconsequent youth the essence of a very real manhood lay within him, while, on the other hand, Anatole had become desperate, and gloomy, and cynical. Much brooding over warped opinions had produced distorted conceptions of realities, and questions of right and wrong became much confused in d'Harcourt's troubled mind. Sceptical by nature, fanatically religious by tradition, he was perpetually swaying from one extreme to the other. He would kneel all night on the cold stone floor of a church as he invoked the aid of heaven and consecrated himself anew to a cause he had taught himself to consider as sacred—not unlike Jacques Clement, who fasted and took the

sacrament before he slew Henri III. But the impious spirit of the age had touched him also, and there were times when he believed in nothing in heaven or on earth. Sarcastic, forceful, bitter; ceremoniously polite or icily formal—he could yet drop a tear of emotion at the knowledge of his friend's rectitude; and to children and to animals he had never said a harsh word in his life. He was more arrogant than proud; he was overbearing rather than firm; but he could be both gracious and courteous, and, strange to say, even gentle. He was brave to recklessness, but failure left him in despair. He was tall and straight and dark. His face was handsome but hard, and his eyes could flash with a light that, once seen, few forgot. His clothes, no matter how old, sat perfectly; and he was as careful of his hands as any lady, and never unconscious of his shapely calves and irreproachably shod and buckled feet.

Victor's portrait can be drawn in lighter lines. Buoyant, hopeful, courageous, he looked forward to the future through clear gray eyes, and spoke brightly of life and its difficulties in tones that never faltered. Of the two men, one represented the expiring spirit of an evil and unscrupulous

past, the other the youth of the new century, with its golden opportunities. Both were the outcome of their age.

During these days that Anatole mused over his affairs alone, Gabrielle watched him closely as he came and went; and his apparent forgetfulness of her fanned the spark of jealousy into a steady though low-burning flame. She became more than ever convinced that he was in love, and her dark eyes looked at him sharply as he passed; but her heightened color, though it added to her looks, did not make him even turn his head. She had already begun to wait upon her father's customers; and as she tripped among the tables in her gay striped, short-waisted gown, and with her hair twisted into a bewitching knot behind, her bright eyes, her cheeks pinker than a rose-petal, her small mouth, and her slightly tiptilted nose made a most alluring picture of a pretty serving-maid. The men gazed upon her in open admiration, and were profuse of compliments; but, unlike her usual self, she did not heed them, for her mind was full of something else.

She stifled all outward expression of anxiety, but waited upon d'Harcourt with increasing solici-

tude, though, in his preoccupation, he barely noticed her. When Victor's letter arrived, it occasioned her fresh alarm, for she saw how eagerly he received it, and that he hastened to shut himself up in his room in order to read it alone. As he passed, the look on his face frightened her.

"It must be that Monsieur Anatole is unhappy," she reflected. "Can it be that the lady he loves is treating him unkindly? Ah, the wicked soul! For me, alas! he has no longer any words, and I know not how to comfort him. He will not even smile when I pass," she continued with a pang. "That must surely mean that he loves another;—but I will know, I must know who it is. He received a letter last night, and it came by a private messenger. It probably was from her, ah, me! But I will watch him;—oh, yes, I will watch him very closely."

CHAPTER III.

While Gabrielle was dwelling on thoughts that gave her pain, and was allowing her head to become filled with all sorts of ideas that had no business there, the young men had met, and Anatole's first care had been to divert his friend's suspicions and to parry his many questions. This was more easily accomplished than he had anticipated, for Victor was far from well, and thus too languid to take his usual interest in what was going on; and he was also much harassed with worry of his own. He was not prone to imagine evil, and he accepted without question his friend's somewhat labored explanations, that tended to turn his thoughts in a perfectly harmless direction, and he never dreamed of the real purport of Anatole's plans.

So Victor remained in Paris shaking with ague, and with his mind full of anxiety regarding his affairs. Like many of the nobles, he had endeavored to repair his fallen fortunes by taking part in some of the speculations then rife, and he had

soon found himself in a very serious financial dilemma. He was both depressed and ill; and to add to his troubles, he was forced to devote his time and attention to an impending lawsuit. He had very little hope that it would come to a successful conclusion, though he had engaged Isidore Bertrand, a brilliant and rising lawyer of the Consulate, to defend his cause; and the uncertainty was most wearing. Worn out with a nagging fever, that had sapped his strength and his spirits, yet d'Olonet had been in despair when the army surgeon had declared him unfit for service, and he had been obliged to leave the camp at Boulogne and return to comparative inactivity at Paris. He had been fighting off a low malarial condition ever since, though trying manfully to fulfill the lighter service to which he had been assigned near the capital. Now he was on the verge of breaking down completely, and rest was imperative, though he failed to avail himself of it. He was alternately burning with fever and shaking with chills, but he took no care of his health; and when he was not actually confined to his bed, he allowed himself to be carried away by the dissipations the great city afforded—to forget himself, he said.

Led on by Anatole and his set, his life had been anything but regular. Wine, cards, and fast society are bad enough at any time; but when indulged in by a man whose health is shattered and whose fortune has departed, they are simply destruction—and yet Victor plunged each day deeper into the vortex of such pleasures, ever rolling up difficulties from which it was to become almost impossible to extricate himself.

In those ante-imperial days there was much about him to entertain and to distract in spite of old prejudices, and he snatched eagerly at all that came in his way; and, in truth, the restlessness, and the insatiate striving of the modern life for profit, or pleasure, or excitement, was infectious. The Parisian world was going through a new phase; and though Anatole regarded it with disdain, it was still the Paris that had produced de Staël and Récamier; it was the city of Talma and of David, and a host of other celebrities in every walk of life, and in its own way it was surpassingly brilliant.

Properly speaking, "society" did not exist any longer, and the old régime was a thing of the past; but charming old Mme. d'Houdetot, keeping apart

from all political parties, gathered about her what was most agreeable and best worth meeting in the social world, and her house was a veritable haven of rest. There both d'Olonet and d'Harcourt were welcome.

The First Consul held his vulgar court at the Tuileries, where it was presided over by his wife, the graceful Creole, whose superb dressing and winning manners raised her each day in popular esteem, while her tact did much to lessen the barrier that lay between the old aristocracy and her powerful consort. There was plenty of glitter and display in this pinchbeck court which had been called into being by the great will that was ruling and reconstructing everything in France, and in the eager race for place and preferment Republican and Royalist jostled each other.

He could be often seen in his carriage as he flashed through the streets of Paris, this small, badly dressed man with the classic features and the eagle eye; a sovereign in all but name, powerful at home, feared abroad, the savior of France —and all eyes turned to the rising sun.

Beautiful Paris, after her orgy of blood and crime, was rehabilitating herself in preparation for the

Empire. There was plenty of life in the streets, and in the cafés, and in all public places. The theatres were crowded. Troops passed frequently; martial music was in the air; men paused in knots on the street-corners to talk. There was an atmosphere of bustle, of forceful action, of regeneration; the movement of new sap stirring through the nation's fibres. Prosperity was beginning to show its face once more, and the slipshod days of the Revolution seemed forgotten? With the returning Royalists came the amenities of life. People dressed well and dined well. Cabs thronged the streets, for the citizens were learning to love ease again, and driving was often to be more desired than picking one's way through the muddy thoroughfares. Silk stockings and embroidered coats were seen, and the women vied with each other in their attire; and this influence affected all classes. Squalor and unloveliness were being relegated to a troubled past, and the impetuous people were rushing on to a tumultuous and extravagant existence that lay in the near future. Nothing succeeds like success, and France was enveloped in a blaze of glory.

Into this seething world of life and excitement

that pervaded the streets of the capital our young men plunged; and Anatole kept close to Victor's elbow, as, like an evil genius, he led him on from one rash act to another. It seemed as though having seen d'Olonet save himself from implication in one mad scheme, d'Harcourt was satisfied. As they loitered about the cafés they met many acquaintances, and opinions were freely exchanged as they discussed the columns of the "Moniteur."

One evening—it was the 29th of March—as they were entering a favorite place of amusement, they heard of the arrest of Georges Cadoudal that had just occurred in the Place de l'Odéon. He was driving in a cabriolet, and when a gendarme caught the horse by the bridle, the Chouan shot him dead. Every one on hearing the news went wild with excitement and all sorts of statements were made. Some declared that he had come with the avowed purpose of slaying Bonaparte, others denied it; and groups of agitated men on the sidewalk gesticulated and talked loudly. When Anatole became aware of what had happened, he turned pale as he remarked dryly: "He would have done well to have availed himself long ago of the First

Consul's overtures if he wanted to live. He is as good as a dead man now."

Victor was intensely concerned, for he had felt the power and fascination of the wonderful personal magnetism exerted by Bonaparte, and with which the whole army was imbued. He believed in him entirely, and was unable to look upon him as a usurper, as Anatole did; for, in his youthful confidence, he still waited for the return of the Legitimists.

"Napoleon Bonaparte is not implacable," he said to his friend. "But he must protect himself. He is the only hope of France."

"I know," replied d'Harcourt, with white lips, "that France has many devoted sons who follow the lead and swell the train of the Corsican. Come, let us go on. The night is fine, and we must walk."

In his moments of suppressed excitement and emotion there was no outlet that gave Anatole such relief as physical exercise. It was as though violent bodily action lessened the tense strain on his nerves; and he now dragged Victor out with him into the street, and started at such a frenzied pace that the other lagged.

"What is the matter?" he asked sharply, looking back. "Can't you come on? One's blood stagnates inside that place, and the noise of voices drives me mad. Let us walk fast in this cold night air. I feel as if I should stifle." But as the yellow light of the flickering street-lamp fell on Victor's face, he paused and continued gently: "You should go home to bed. Why, man, you are pale as death! You are positively livid. Are you ill?"

"No, I am not ill; but one of those chills is coming on, and my bones ache as if they were broken. The feeling of this damp air penetrates me."

A drizzling rain was falling, and where the gleam of lights showed across the wet streets, the reflection of wavering flames lay on the wet mud, with a dull glow of color. The sound of wheels was subdued, and the roar of the city seemed muffled by the environing mist that wrapped one up in its cold, white embrace. Concentrated moisture fell in large drops from the bare branches of the trees and swelled the little lakes at the roots; and as the wind stirred the boughs the patter of falling water appeared prophetic of a heavier

shower. It was certainly an uninviting night for exercise, and Victor drew his shoulders together and shivered as he added, "I am cold as a stone."

In a moment Anatole's arm linked in his friend's, and the light of love lit up his eyes. Gently as a mother tending a sick child, he led the other back to his lodging, and never left him until he saw him safely in bed with a warm drink beside him; —and comforted by the warmth, d'Olonet sank into an uneasy slumber.

Victor was a charming fellow in spite of his faults. Young, ardent, confident, he seemed to the sombre-minded friend of his childhood as a very son of the gods. He had an oval face, with good features. His eyes were rather deeply set under a smooth, square brow, and his mouth showed the peculiar sweetness of his nature. He was sound as he was loyal, and his open face was a constant reproach to his companion. Born in the country, bred in the open air, he had imbibed something of the beauty and the strength of the nature amid which he lived; and when the terrible trials came that destroyed his home and separated him from his family when he was still but a lad of fifteen, his quiet confidence in himself, his

unquenchable spirit of hope, and, beyond all, his energy and activity had carried him safely through much that would have wrecked many a nature less truly sweet and sound than his. Pleasure-loving by temperament, and easily carried away by a trust that made it difficult for him to doubt those he loved, he sometimes let himself be drawn into paths that he would have done better to have left untrodden; and this weakness constituted a serious flaw in his facile character. It was in consequence of this very thing that he was rapidly deteriorating in the unhealthy atmosphere of the life into which Anatole had introduced him. In spite of inherited traditions, he was somewhat democratic in his tastes. He dressed soberly when not in uniform, and he wore his hair cut short, like the men of the new régime. There was something in his composition that called for his devotion, reverence, and a clinging fidelity to something. He would have been a trusty follower of his king had fortune turned that way, but the growing glory of the present appealed to him, and he believed with all his heart that Bonaparte had rescued the country from turmoil and strife, and had established a strong but provisional government;

and so to the present form of law and order he had transferred all his loyalty. His state of mind was curious; and if he had probed his own consciousness, he would have really found the word liberty written on his heart. But Victor was not given to introspection. Extremely simple and straightforward in his desires, he asked for nothing better than a vocation in which he could serve his country faithfully and upon which he could spend his boundless energy. This the army gave him, and he asked for nothing further. He would have liked more money. He dreamed of the time when he should see his mother and sister again, but he was in the meantime perfectly contented, and grasped eagerly at the distractions his present life afforded.

As Anatole watched him sleeping, something like remorse swept over him. Had he done his best by the lad? He was three years his senior, and his own life had not been without reproach. Was he leading Victor in the way his mother would have wished him to go?

"A man is a man," he answered himself testily. "Victor is not a child, and he must take care of his own life. But he played too high last night.

I must try and keep him from the card-table for the present, or he will lose all that is left of his small pay. His hands are free of my affairs, thank the saints! I was a fool to even think for a moment of that impressionable boy. When he looks at me with that clear gaze of his, I almost drop my own eyes. But what I do I shall do openly. A gentleman never strikes from behind, and a gentleman also knows how to die himself when the time comes. What I do shall be done in the name of the King."

"The King!" The word was a fetish. It was more: it was a creed, a religion almost. What perfidy and rapine, what devotion and honor, what self-sacrifice and glorious deeds, what black treachery and injustice have been wrought through the long ages for—"The King!"

Anatole shook his head despondently, and after a time he went home. He was powerless to stay Victor's mad career, for he was not an instrument for good himself; but other help was near, though it was to come from a quarter neither would have dreamed of.

CHAPTER IV.

ISIDORE BERTRAND had kept a watchful eye on his client, and he had become aware that things were going badly with him. The lawyer was a man of quick discernment and not unkindly nature. He liked the young fellow; and though it really was no business of his, he saw with regret that Victor was becoming more and more involved in troubles and embarrassments of various kinds, while his health was in such a precarious condition that a complete breakdown was imminent. The insidious poison of the malaria was sapping his strength, and the pace at which he was living gave him no chance to recuperate, so he was wearing himself out.

"He needs rest for both mind and body," concluded this sapient advocate, "and above all things he should be drawn from his present companions and brought under a noble woman's influence. I wonder if Madeleine could save him."

Isidore had the most unlimited confidence in

Madeleine. She was his sister; and though twelve years his junior, he had made her his constant companion, and he loved her and believed in her with all the devotion of a strong man's affection. They were indeed bound together by ties that were peculiarly close, and Isidore had filled the place of both father and mother to the child, who had matured rapidly after the dark days had passed that had left them stranded without a home in this difficult world, and with the care of two small brothers and a baby sister upon their shoulders. He had been a young man then, barely twenty-eight, and she had been only sixteen, when they had been overwhelmed by calamity of the most frightful sort. Both parents were snatched away from them during the terrible Reign of Terror; and the brother, gathering within his strong arms all that was left of the once happy family, bore the children and Madeleine away with him to a distant part of the city, and there they had begun life all over again.

Together he and his young sister had solved the problem of livelihood, and hand in hand they had struggled on and had watched over the others. But Bertrand's first thought had always been for

this dear companion, to whom the responsibilities of life had come so early, and his most earnest desire was to live for her, and to make up as far as he could for her lost youth. Endowed with keen perceptions and a quick mind, he had prospered; and though they had lived through hard days at first, he nursed his little capital until his own business abilities brought in plenty. Isidore was a very successful man as things go, but he always declared that the courage and enterprise that had made this possible were in a large measure due to the sympathy and understanding he had ever received from his favorite sister. In his turn, he had lavished upon her the most unceasing tenderness, and he had trained and educated her mind in accordance with his own views, which were both broad and cultivated; and she had thus learned as she grew up much that was best worth knowing, and her naturally fine mind had become developed and enriched. But the dark cloud that had hung over her childhood still lay above her, and she had never been able to free herself of its shadow. Constant intercourse with her brother, who from the very first had gravely treated her as his companion, discussing and explaining much that hap-

pily does not often enter into the sheltered life of adolescence, gave her much to muse over, and left her more thoughtful and self-contained than is usually the case with young womanhood, while she bore upon her countenance the trace of the terrible sorrow whose mark had been ineffaceably stamped there.

Naturally studious, she had learned much by herself that her various teachers had failed to impart; and during long years the books she read and discussed with Isidore increased her capabilities. But as time went on and the pupil became a woman, Bertrand discovered, to his surprise, that their attitude had changed. It was she who now in many ways became the master. She inculcated the virtues of constancy and of patience. It was she who whispered hope in his heart in times of depression. She it was also, who was the first to rejoice at his success and, when wealth came, to teach him that thrift should be balanced by generosity.

Bertrand had been an uncompromising Republican, but the outrages committed in the sacred name of Liberty had made him sick, and he turned with loathing from the sea of blood that had swept over

France. Bonaparte appeared to him as the rising star of his country's future, and the hope and stronghold of a distraught and blood-drenched nation; and he had hailed the meteor-like career of the "Man of the Revolution" with an enthusiasm that made him blind to every fault of his idol, and left himself only as a stanch upholder and follower. From the very first he had been carried away by the fascination that has influenced the world. A self-made man himself, he adored the man who, above all others, was carving out a future with the force of a surpassing genius. Madeleine was graver than her brother—less impulsive; but she was exceptionally steadfast. A daughter of the people, she looked to the people more than to the man, though she recognized his genius; and the principles of the Revolution, unsullied by crime, appeared to her understanding and sympathy as a creed that was second only to that of her religion; and the dream of what an ideal Republic might be was what she often pondered over. Like most of his class, Isidore had thrown over all religious beliefs, but Madeline clung tenaciously to the faith of her childhood that she had learned at her mother's knee.

At one time the Bertrands had dwelt in a small house that was situated in a narrow street of Passy; but as times improved, and money swelled the lawyer's resources, the borders of their habitation widened and they left the suburbs and re-entered Paris. They had moved once or twice after that, but settled definitely at last; and at the time of which we write were charmingly established in their own home, from the windows of which they could just catch glimpses of the waving tops of the chestnut trees in the Tuileries gardens, as they rose above the gold spear-points of the tall iron railings. The Bertrands' home overlooked on the other side a cool, shaded court; and in the high-ceiled rooms of their dwelling Madeleine administered her household affairs. No matter how tired he was, Isidore always began to feel rested the moment he entered his own door, and he often wondered if other men loved their home as much as he did. Always neat and flower-adorned, sun-lit or shaded according to the season, the pleasant apartments were attractive to the eye as well as comforting to his physical needs; while the tall mistress of his castle, who met him every evening on its threshold, was still as loving and confiding

as the little girl had been that he had often hushed to sleep upon his knee. There was something in the touch of Madeleine's hand, and also in the calm, low notes of her voice, that soothed and satisfied him completely.

There is nothing more gratifying than the acquiescence of others in one's own views, and Bertrand was particularly sensitive to this form of flattery. Happily for them both, he and his sister were usually of accord, and even when Madeleine's opinions differed from his, they were so tactfully expressed in spite of their firmness that he was never ruffled; and such a thing as a jar between these close companions was never known. As time went on, the lawyer depended more and more upon her clear judgment and common-sense, while her intelligence caused him to take an ever-increasing delight in conversing with her, and thus, in this ideal intercourse between two bright minds, the difference in their ages dwindled to almost nothing. Knowing the power that this treasure of his possessed for the soothing of worried and perplexed man, Bertrand bethought himself of his sister when he became cognizant of the life Victor was leading.

"I wonder if Madeleine could save him," he repeated to himself. "Victor d'Olonet is too good a fellow to be allowed to go to destruction. We must see what can be done."

One day the young officer called upon his lawyer, looking so desperately ill that Bertrand was startled. There was certainly no time to be lost, and he reproached himself for not having spoken sooner. He hated above all things to meddle with affairs that were no concern of his, but the case in point appeared to him very much like stretching out one's hand to rescue a drowning man who was being carried out to sea on a dangerous tide. He proceeded, therefore, with the business on hand, but as he put his papers carefully together at its conclusion, he turned to his client interrogatively:

"Was it not your father who was so celebrated for his wonderful rose-garden some years ago?"

Victor's face lighted up. "Ah, if you could have seen it, you would not ask. My father was passionately devoted to horticulture, and his gardens and conservatories were known all over France. Our roses were a veritable wonder, and I can well remember with what delight he used to gather

them himself, and how he loved to send the choicest blossoms to his friends. Those were good times," he added, under his breath. "But the roses did not grow on the old family estate in Brittany. We owned a smaller place near Versailles, and it was there that they bloomed to such perfection. There were none finer at the Trianon itself."

"Perhaps you share the same taste?" resumed the lawyer. "Listen, my friend," he said earnestly as he laid a firm hand on the young man's arm. "You are ill, and need rest; and unless you take it, this life you are leading will inevitably kill you. Can you not pass a reasonable evening for once? My sister Madeleine and I will both feel honored if you will come to see our roses that she has cultivated with marvellous success in our small conservatory."

The wily advocate knew that he must lay bait in order to catch the ex-aristocrat.

"I have heard of your sister," said Victor. "They say she is charming."

"She is even more good than beautiful. I think her perfect, M. le Comte," answered Bertrand gravely.

The young man started, for Isidore had not only dropped the distasteful appellation of "citizen," but he had given him his proper title. D'Olonet was intensely gratified.

"I will come," said he shortly. "Thank you for your hospitality."

"You will find us quite alone," Bertrand went on to say, "for Lili, my younger sister, is away visiting our uncle in Lyons; and Gaspard and Réné are only schoolboys."

When the appointed time arrived, Victor reached the Bertrands' home, but he paused outside a moment before entering. As he stood in the street he asked himself why he had accepted the cordial invitation, and an unwilling smile just loosened the corners of his mouth. In that instant of self-inquiry there came to him a sudden but very vivid preconception of the certain displeasure with which his mother would greet the news of his impending friendship. What had he, the head of one of the oldest families in France, to do with this bourgeois household? He impatiently thrust his hand within the breast of his tightly buttoned coat, and he turned to take a few rapid steps up and down on the wet sidewalk. It was drizzling

again. The lights flickered and lit up the pavement, that had turned black with the moisture, and the dampness with which the atmosphere was saturated clung to the glass of the street-lamps and was blown in his face. It was not inviting out of doors, and the vision of a beautiful woman, and of roses blooming in great jars, flitted before his mental sight. Even as it came, he heard in imagination Anatole's scornful laugh; and he actually felt the sting of unuttered words, for he knew so well what their purport would be. For a second, he was tempted to hail a passing cab and return to his own lodging, but the hesitation did not last. "What has Anatole to do with my affairs?" he muttered. "And as for my mother, she has chosen to live in the stranger's land and to eat the bread of exile, which must be bitter enough;—but I am here and must judge for myself who are to be my friends. She is just as proud as when she lived the life of a great lady on our own estates;—but that is all over now, and I am only a poor officer, with no home but the camp. I must take my pleasures as I find them. It is the people who are in the ascendant to-day;—but nobles and commoners are of the same race.

Mon dieu! What does the social question matter, after all?"

At that moment a distant burst of laughter, and a flash of light that streamed through a half-opened window across the way, brought back his dream of a smiling face and of fragrant flowers. The dampness and the detestable walking seemed doubly unattractive, while a consciousness of his own loneliness oppressed him. He lingered no longer. As he passed for the first time beneath the roof that sheltered the lawyer's family, the die was cast that was to open many a new chapter in his own life.

Continuing on his way, he gave his name to the servant who admitted him, and then he passed on up the broad flight of stairs upon the crimson carpet that stretched from the wall on one side to the iron balustrade on the other. Its texture was soft and yielding, and impressed him with a sense of luxury. Arrived in the vestibule, he paused to remove his outer garments, and the incongruity of his position struck him again. Why had he come there, after all? What had he in common with these people?

As he glanced about him he noticed that though

the place was furnished with true republican simplicity, everything was good and substantial of its kind; and the servant who had carried away his wet coat was as well trained as any he had ever seen. An indescribable feeling of comfort and of well-being crept over Victor. There are some interiors that convey this impression at once, and even the ante-chamber is indicative of the home beyond. "A soldier of fortune cannot choose," he concluded, as he drew back to allow the servant to step on in advance to announce him. "This certainly gives the promise of a more reposeful evening than the ones we are apt to pass in the back room of some small café or restaurant, drinking sour wine while the other fellows manage to empty my pockets with the luck they always have at cards, but which persistently forsakes me. This bourgeois lawyer knows how to live, *ma foi!*—and if his sister is as handsome as they say she is, the evening will be interesting."

In the general upheaval of things during the foregoing years, fortunes had been made and lost quickly, and Bertrand had been among the fortunate ones who had amassed very considerable property, and this, well invested, had brought a

large income. Indulging his tastes, therefore—in which he was to a large extent guided by Madeleine's sure eye and instinctive refinement—they lived in the greatest ease, not to say luxury.

When the folding-doors were thrown back by the careful domestic, Victor saw before him a large room, where the lights were reflected from a highly polished floor of parquetry, except where it was covered in the centre by an Aubusson carpet. The furniture was mostly of the Louis XVI. period and of the very best; a few good pictures hung upon the walls, and a harpsichord stood in one corner beneath the shelter of a group of potted palms. Beyond, glass doors opened into the conservatory. A pair of rare Sèvres vases stood on the mantel between the gilt clock and candelabra; and the soft light of wax candles that burned in a pair of sconces shone on either side. On a round table with heavily carved feet, that was placed directly in the middle of the room, there was a lamp; and beside it lay a litter of books and needle-work. A tepid air, in which the fragrance of flowers and a suggestion of wood-smoke were mingled, filled the apartment, and was perceptible to the visitor, who stood hat in hand upon the threshold, imbued

with just a shade of embarrassment as he turned toward his host, who, with his sister, arose from a low sofa near the fire and came toward him.

As Victor looked he took in the whole pleasant picture at a glance, and his desire to withdraw melted like snow before the sun; and so agreeable and winning did the prospect appear to him that a smile broke over his face and lit up the corners of his mouth, and overflowed into his laughing eyes as they fell upon the couple who welcomed him.

Bertrand was distinctly bourgeois in type, and, in contrast, his sister's peculiar refinement was the more striking. She was tall rather than short, having attained that indefinite height that can be queenly without becoming overpowering; and her figure was slender without being thin. Her hair, which constituted her chief glory, was of a rich, golden chestnut, and was divided into two waving masses, that were gathered together and twisted upon her head, according to the graceful fashion of those days, but it was not held in place by any confining bands; and the color of her abundant tresses enhanced the charm of her rather pale face and of her clear hazel eyes. Her features, that

when in repose were habitually sad, were illumined now by a smile that lent a rare loveliness; and her sensitive mouth and firm round chin were evidences of a strong nature well under control, although replete with intense, even passionate, feeling. It was an interesting, sympathetic face; and its attraction was more in its great sweetness than in any absolute beauty. It was essentially one to love. This impression was deepened by her voice, which was pitched in rather low but full, clear tones.

"You are most welcome," she said, as she extended her hand after Bertrand's hearty greeting. "My brother tells me that you are alone in Paris, and that you have been ill."

As she lifted her eyes to meet Victor's, their glances met, and for the space of a second they each gazed straight into the depths of the other's clear look; and even then, in that first moment of proximity, Victor felt a dim consciousness that the meeting was not an ordinary one. The last shred of his reluctance vanished, and his face flushed slightly as he bowed and responded in words of conventional politeness. Presently he found himself seated with the others about the round table,

while conversation flowed easily and quickly into the current of the all-absorbing topics of those busy days But as he talked he found himself wondering at the wealth of her glorious locks, and he watched with an ever-increasing pleasure the changing expression of her eyes. They had a way of lighting up quickly with a kindling glance that thrilled him. There are hazel eyes that can flash brightly, and there are others clear and transparent as amber, though shot with a darker color;· but hers were different. There was a depth in them that he could not fathom, and the hidden fire they concealed came and went as she became moved while she talked. It was there; and in a moment again it was gone, like the sudden flashing and disappearing of a distant light on a dark night. At other moments her eyes were calm, trustful, tender; but ever and anon came this strange gleam of an unsuspected power. She said nothing particularly striking herself, and it was Bertrand's words that called it forth—words that breathed a loyalty, and daring, and energy, that made Victor glow at the thought of France's future, and that sent soft pink waves of color beneath Madeleine's transparent skin. Her assent, except for that

spark of flame, was quiet enough. Bertrand took the lead, and she acquiesced.

There are those whose personality pervades the atmosphere of the house they live in; whose touch reveals their presence even through inanimate things, and with whom it is an inspiration to live. It is not in what they say so much as in what they do. The quick, tender hand, the intelligent eye, the sensitive mouth, convey what spoken words are ofttimes powerless to express. A room seems full when they are there; a house unutterably lonely when their gracious presence has departed. It is the intangible power of a strong, sweet nature, that pervades a home like the fragrance of flowers. It is among the choicest as it is among the least appreciated blessings of our lives; for this joy, when present, is too often accepted as a matter of course until, when bereft of it, we are entirely undone.

Madeleine was a woman built on noble lines, both mentally and physically; and she possessed to a great degree this quality of a pervasive personality. The whole apartment breathed the influence of her thought and of her touch. As Victor d'Olonet sat in the mellow lamplight, he became

impressed with a sense of repose and content; and he settled back comfortably in his deep armchair as he watched her sorting the colored silks she drew for her embroidery from the reticule at her side. It was the first glimpse of home life that he had had for years; the first evening of domestic lamplight and of crumbling logs, and of homely aspect, that he had ever passed under a stranger's roof;—and his own, alas! lay in ruins.

He had been a mere lad in the military school when his family had been scattered, and he had stubbornly refused exile. A lonely boy, he had remained where he was, even passing his vacations there until the time had come for him to enter the army. He had mixed somewhat in the strangely conglomerate society of Paris; but he had been too much under Anatole's influence to shake loose from the doubtful revels of his small set, and in the larger gatherings he had felt alone, one of a throng of strangers;—and when any festivity was over he had only his desolate attic room to look forward to. It had all been so different from the absolute ease of this informal call.

It was true that the evening held no other ending for him. The cold, lonely walk, and the bare

lodging still waited for him; but in the meantime he had had some compensation. Here was companionship that was sweet and gentle, as refreshing to his soul as summer showers to a thirsty soil. It was something that made the riotous evenings with Anatole and the others seem distasteful, and he felt no inclination, either, for the rude frolic of the barracks.

An hour slipped away imperceptibly. Bertrand rose at last and gathered the broken logs between the andirons together, and the glowing embers fell into a heap that sent a sudden puff of heat out into the room. Then they flared up again as the flame caught on the edges of fresh wood. They blazed, and danced, and shot up long red tongues, and their light lay on the burnished gold of Madeleine's hair. The white cat, curled into a ball on its cushion, purred; Bertrand's dog stretched himself as he enjoyed the genial warmth, and lay unreproached upon the skirt of his mistress' gown. The moisture outside condensed as it fell upon the window, and ran down in an occasional audible trickle; but, for all that, the shower was clearing, and the stars were getting ready to light Victor's walk when he should choose to leave. The clock

ticked away, and finally struck ten soft strokes; and then Madeleine motioned to her brother, and he rang for the tea. It was very beguiling, and reposeful; and in his placid acceptance of the ease and rest of the present hour, d'Olonet had altogether forgotten the object of his visit until the lawyer himself broached the subject. Even then he was loath to leave the fireside, for premonitory chills of malaria were creeping down his shoulders.

"You must show off your roses, Madeleine," said Isidore. "Lead the way, and I will follow with the light."

Who does not know that delicious odor of highly cultivated vegetation under glass, when the very mould seems to be fragrant, and the masses of color shine among the foliage, their beauty only vying with their sweetness? Madeleine knew and loved each plant, and she touched the petals softly as she moved between the rows of flower-pots, explaining and exhibiting all to her guest.

"The cold season never seems long or dreary," she said, "for I have my winter-garden. I pass hours among my plants and flowers, for I love them dearly and I think they love me."

"They are most fortunate to have such care," murmured Victor, as he watched the well-formed hands tie up a loose spray of the climbing roses. Madeleine wore a dress of some soft material of a dovelike color, and this hung in easy folds as she stretched her hands upward to fasten the truant cluster, and the lace about her throat fell back loosely, displaying her white neck. She was pleased with her occupation and smiled as the nodding blossoms above caressed her hair with their tender touches—and when she had accomplished her pretty task to her complete satisfaction, she cut one or two long stems, and, with a deft movement, laid them like a swath across her arm. Victor thought he had never seen anything so graceful.

Finally, she led the way back to the shaded lights in the large room, and began to draw him out in conversation, as she embroidered and he lazily sipped his tea.

"Mademoiselle," said d'Olonet, as he watched the movements of her slender fingers, "I have placed myself in your brother's hands. If he wins this suit for me, I shall have a moderate fortune to depend upon."

"And if he does not?" she asked, more with her eyes than with her lips.

"I shall have nothing left in the world," he replied, "but my sword;—and my name," he added, after a slight pause. "The d'Olonets have always been brave and true."

"That is good," said she softly. "It is an old name and an honor to those who bear it. I have often heard of your father. It was through his misfortune, not his fault, that he was called upon to expiate the sins of others."

"You speak truly, mademoiselle. He was so good that all who knew him loved him. The old days, while he was still with us, remain as the happiest recollection of my childhood. And I also often think of the dear old chateau where my sister and I were born. I wish that you could see it as I picture it now in my mind's eye, its gray walls showing at the end of a long avenue of trees. It was turret-crowned and moated, and it had resounding corridors and carved-stone stairways. Up on the roof, the tiles were covered with green and yellow lichens, they were so old; but we boys loved to climb up there and to look out over the country. The air was fresh and strong, and far

away lay a line of blue water. That was the sea. Anatole d'Harcourt and I have been up among the eaves many a time, and have hunted for swallows that nested in the chimneys."

"Tell me some more about it," said Madeleine; and he gladly went on.

"The chateau stood on a hillside and the garden was laid out on terraces below, but the estate stretched away in every direction. We owned all the forests and all the fields about us. The lives we led were very happy and very peaceful, but my sister Antoinette and I had plenty of amusement in spite of our long hours of study with the *curé*. And there was life about the place too in those days, before I was sent to school and all the dreadful trouble began. In the summer season the house was full of company. One rode and hunted, and carriages came and went constantly with arriving and departing guests. Our doors always stood open, and every one was served bountifully, as one should be in the home of a *grand seigneur*—and there was always music and dancing. On quiet winter evenings the *curé* used to come and dine, and afterwards played at piquet with my parents, and we children stood by and

watched; but after the lackey brought in the chocolate we were sent off to bed. I can remember it all so plainly! They loved us in the village. My mother used to be carried there in her sedan-chair, in order to visit the poor in their homes; and they blessed her when she passed, for she brought them warm clothes, or soup from the chateau kitchen. When my father rode past the peasant's houses as he came home from the chase, he delighted to crack his whip for a signal, and then to scatter small coin for the poor lads to pick up. But we did not always live at 'Beaulieu'; and I think that I like best to remember him in our little place near Versailles that he had turned into a perfect bower of beauty. It was there that he had his rose-garden that he so dearly loved. Every one who saw it said that it was only second to the queen's own pleasure-ground at the little Trianon; —and all know that that was a marvel. My sister and I used to walk with our father, one on either side, as he followed the old gardener closely, telling him just what to cut with his great shears. He was devoted to his roses and used to send large baskets of them to court. What joy it would have been could he have sent them to our poor queen

when she was in the Temple and far from her own fair flowers, as a token of his faithful love! But his own turn came at last." Victor's voice was choking. "And they took him away to the Conciergerie, and they burned the pretty house and destroyed the garden; and then they turned us out of the dear old home in Brittany;—and at last, after weeks of cruel waiting, they took his gracious, noble life." He could say no more, and hid his face in both his hands as he finished.

"My friend," said a clear voice at his side, "I too have suffered. Both father and mother were taken from us, and life can never be the same again, for the shadow of that sacrifice must fall on it forever. They were, in the parlance of those days, 'suspected'; and the Revolution turned on its own children and devoured them."

"Then, mademoiselle," he exclaimed eagerly, "we suffer in common; and you too will be glad to welcome the time when France may see her own return. I will build my chateau up again, and I will fill it with noble company; and, mademoiselle, I shall be proud to show you how we lived in the old times."

There was a moment's pause, and as he looked

up his face flushed with an excitement that had touched his deepest feelings. He had forgotten the feverish heat of the ague, and the wearing lassitude of the malarial chills that had drawn deep lines about his eyes, and that had made the evening's repose so grateful. He looked, in his enthusiasm, well and strong, and his young face glowed with emotion.

"We are of the people, sir," she said proudly; and as she lifted her head defiantly, the light flashed from her eyes. They met his for an instant, and then she held out her hand impulsively.

"On one ground we can meet, monsieur. You are in the army. *Vive la France!*"

"Yes," he exclaimed fervently. "May defeat come to her foes without and to her enemies within!"

"Brava," said Bertrand's voice from behind them, and he began to hum the "Marseillaise"—but the woman only breathed "Amen."

"No, Isidore," begged Madeleine presently; "do not let us have that to-night. Let us think of something more peaceful. The winter, with its leaden skies, is over; spring has come, and soon these gray days will pass, and we shall have our

flowers out of doors, and we can live ourselves in the open sunshine. Do you remember this?" she said, turning to Victor. "It strikes a gentler note than that of Rouget de l'Isle;"—and she repeated in an undertone the opening lines of a graceful rondel that had come down from out of the fifteenth century, a legacy of Charles d'Orléans:

"Le temps a laissie son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,
Et s'est vestu de brouderie,
De soleil luyant, cler et beau."

In response to Victor's look of pleasure, she added quickly: "The springtime is a new joy and wonder every year. Do you know those quaint old verses have a peculiar fascination for me? Bring the lights and I will sing for you."

The young men placed the tall silver candlesticks upon the harpsichord. She seated herself before the instrument, and looked up as she nodded and smiled at them brightly. "This is an old one, too. Listen." Striking the keys, she trolled forth verse after verse of Ronsard's song of the early year, written for his love while his heart was full of hope and of the pure joy of living,

—and as she sang her face was all alight with pleasure.

Victor could not take his eyes off her, as he stood directly opposite, with one hand thrust within the bosom of his double-breasted military coat, while with the other he gently tapped the cover of the harpsichord, keeping perfect time.

"Ne laissons passer en vain
Si soudain
Les ans de nostre jeunesse"—

he repeated. "That is charming, Mlle. Bertrand. Have you other words to sing as harbingers of the season of hope?"

Its brightness was tardy in coming outside, but springtime was abroad in his heart that night.

"No," she said decidedly as she arose. "That is enough for one time, monsieur. You look ill and tired. Go home now to bed and rest, but come to us soon again."

She held out her hand in her own frank, cordial way; and as Victor bent to kiss it he murmured, "This is the first happy evening I have passed since I came to Paris."

When he reached the street, his head was in a

whirl, and he confessed to himself that he had found the lawyer's sister altogether adorable. Anatole might scoff as much as he liked; such women were rare, and this new friendship was one to be cultivated. Before he returned to where he dwelt he took a turn by the river, in order to cool his throbbing temples, for he was burning with fever and his thoughts were in a tumult. Leaning on the stone balustrade of the Pont Neuf, he looked out at the glittering lights that twinkled in response to the myriad stars overhead in the intensely blue sky. A warmer air was wafted to him, for the rain-clouds had entirely passed away; and as his nostrils quivered, he became aware of the first breath of real spring, though April was still young, and his heart filled with the exultation that comes to every one of us with the reawakening of nature's life. Was a new existence beginning for him also? The bare branches of the trees were silhouetted in the uncertain light, and he could see the looming walls of great buildings, and he noticed how distinctly the spires stood out in the night air. Only the distant rumble of occasional vehicles was heard. All was hushed, for the great city was sleeping. It is always a solemn

sight when one is thus alone at night and looks out over the deserted streets, but Victor's mind was occupied with other things. Madeleine had taken possession of his thoughts. "Why should one care for class distinctions?" he reflected, as he saw again in imagination this lovely daughter of the people as she moved among the flowers with her graceful and noble carriage. Then he laughed to himself softly as he glanced down at his own coat, for did he not wear the livery of the Republic that had said all men were equal? Alas, poor Republic, so irrevocably stained with blood and crime that no one dared to mention it! Now, it had become the Consulate, guided by one predominating genius that was surely reaching out its hand to grasp imperial power in spite of its affected refusal. "The old things have passed away; we must arrange our lives anew." The thought came with the pregnant force of conviction: "If it were not too absurd, I should almost fancy myself in love," muttered the young man; and then, as the night air struck him with a sudden chill, he shivered slightly and turned toward his lodgings.

When he reached there, he found Anatole and

the others waiting for him with their chairs drawn up around the table set for a midnight revel.

"Take those things away," he said wearily. "I am tired and want to go to bed."

"Where have you been," said de Boissy, with a sneer, "that you do not care for our good fellowship?"

"In Heaven," he answered shortly; and when they had gone, he closed the door after them with a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER V.

When Anatole reached the *Sapin Vert* that night and began to climb the steep stairs, he noticed that a light had been lit for his accommodation, and the attention pleased him. Amand Gourtain knew his business well, and was evidently aware that it was not an agreeable thing for a gentleman to be forced to stumble up the irregular steps in the dark. Just as this thought crossed d'Harcourt's mind he noticed, crouched in a corner of the corridor above the first landing, a small figure; and as he came closer he perceived that it was Gabrielle.

"What are you doing here?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Monsieur is late," she replied reproachfully. "It must be long after midnight; and I have waited a great while. It was I who left the light."

He gave vent to an ejaculation of annoyance, for he hated to be watched and followed about by her, but she laid a finger on her lips, in warning.

"Hush!" she said. "We must wake no one. What would my mother say if she knew that I was here?" She began to whimper, but put out her hand stealthily and took hold of the skirt of his coat.

"Listen, M. d'Harcourt," she began, and her breath came and went quickly. "I must speak now, for I have waited and waited for days to get a word with you;—but you have never had a smile or even a little look for me, though you used to be so kind. And I have been asking myself in what I have offended, for I cannot bear monsieur's coldness any longer; and his silence is killing me." She caught her breath and went on: "And I said to myself at last, it must be because monsieur's mind is full of other things that he has no time for me; but I will wait for him at night, when no one else is near to scold me for troubling him, and I will ask him why this change has come, and I will tell him that his little Gabrielle is lonely. See, I wear the buttons and the silver buckles always, and yet, though he gave them to me, monsieur has not even noticed them."

She gave a little sob, and the young man at first hardly knew whether to be angry or flattered.

"I have been busy," he said at last. "One of my dearest friends has come to the city."

"I know it," she answered sorrowfully, as her voice grew husky and the tears welled up and brimmed over. "Then, all the good times are over. We can never again walk in the pleasant gardens, or go to the shops, or do the other things we used to do. I have waited day after day to get one little word, and, after all, it has only been to be told this."

"But, Gabrielle, what do you want?" he asked, in perplexity. "You are a good child, and I will buy you toys again; but you must not cry."

He sat down on the upper step, and when she crept beside him he passed his arm about her waist, and her head dropped upon his shoulder as a matter of course. She was such a little thing, and her cheek was so soft and velvety when he stooped to kiss the tears away, that he did not mind at all when she snuggled closer.

"Do you really care for me, little one?" he asked, in the insinuating tones he knew so well how to use. He had put the question only a few days before, but the answer came with doubled fervor now.

She clasped his hand and carried it to her lips. They were warm and dewy as a child's; and as he held her in his arms he could feel her tremble, while her heart fluttered like a frightened bird's.

"Is it very wrong for me to tell monsieur how I love him?"

"No, my child; it is not wrong to tell your best friend everything that you wish to. He will always be good to you; but you must promise to do what he tells you. Will you trust me, Gabrielle? You see I am wiser and older than you are, and I must know what is right."

"Yes, monsieur."

"And if I ask you some day to carry a message for me, your feet will travel fast, will they not? And you will only deliver it to the person I name to you?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And, Gabrielle, you will never say to any one who it is that sends you, or who it is that my message is for?"

"No, monsieur."

"But will come home quickly; and then we will go out together again and buy cakes and syrup;

and if I can find the money, you shall have some new ribbons."

"Yes, monsieur," she assented gladly, but after a second she faltered: "Is she beautiful, M. d'Harcourt? Will she be kind to me?"

"Is who beautiful?"

"Why, the lady, of course, that monsieur visits, and to whom he will send the letters."

She was crying again, and Anatole felt the warm drops on his hand; but he understood it all now: the little girl was jealous.

"No matter who it is that I write to," he answered. "Perhaps it is not to a lady at all. At any rate, nothing shall come between us. We are old friends, you know. Shall I tell you a secret, Gabrielle? It is to be ours alone, and no one else in the wide world shall have any idea what it is." He drew a ring off his finger and solemnly put it on hers. "See, this is our pledge. It means that we are great friends, and that we will do anything to help each other. That is our secret."

"Anything, monsieur?" she asked, as her heart fluttered. "The other is a real lady, you know."

She was certainly very winning. The lamp shone directly on her face, and to Anatole it looked

as innocent as a baby's; and she seemed just about as helpless. Her hair had become disordered, and it fell in a dark cloud on his shoulder; and as her lips parted he could see the gleam of her pretty teeth. As she nestled closer to him, he was conscious of the soft, warm curves of her body; and under his palm he could still feel the palpitations of her heart. He wondered if the child really knew how wrong she had been to waylay him; but he felt no doubt as to her affection. They were all alone on the dim stairway. She was clinging to him, and was continually pressing her lips to his hand. Was there any other in the whole world who loved him so; any one of the fine ladies in his own station of life who cared for him as this child did, though she was only the daughter of his old servant? He gently disengaged his fingers and began to stroke her hair.

"Anything, monsieur?"

Why is it that the devil is ever near to tempt frail man? When the girl spoke, her companion only kissed her and whispered back, "Everything, Gabrielle."

And she murmured, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, "Ah, we shall be so happy."

That brought him to himself, for he did not wish to pain her, and, besides, he hated a scene. Of course he meant to pet her as usual, and to give her presents, as he had always done. He was too indolent and too pleasure-loving also to ruthlessly sever the bond between them, even though it might save the girl a future heartbreak. Instead of doing this he whispered again, "Remember it is our pledge, but nobody must know."

"But the lady," she persisted. "Will monsieur still visit the lady?"

He laughed bitterly. "Oh, she will not care," he said; "and, after all, I know so many. Only be true to me and nothing can ever separate us. But," he added sternly, "if you disobey me, I will go to her every day. Come, child, kiss me for good-night. If you were found here, your father would be very angry."

A long clinging kiss, an embrace from soft arms, a rustle of skirts down the dark corridor, and she was gone.

He went on to his own room and struck a light. Then he sat down at the table and began to write rapidly; but his mind strayed, and his pen travelled more and more slowly until its work stopped en-

tirely, and he paused to think as he leaned with his elbow upon his knee and his chin supported in his hand. Anatole was forming his plans. Of one thing he was certain. He had secured a tool that would never fail him, and he determined, with the utmost coolness, to play upon the young girl's affections, holding her thus in bondage to himself. He did not scorn to make use of anything that came in his way, and the cruelty of his purpose did not touch him in the least.

His hand was tender to whatever he held in his grasp so long as his captive did not struggle, but he was capable of crushing it relentlessly in his unyielding hold if it proved to be an obstacle in his way. Utterly reckless of himself, he did not hesitate to sacrifice others. Wearied by the vacillating policy of his companions, he had almost determined to wait for them no longer, but to do the desperate deed himself upon which his mind was fixed;—and he hoped to obtain from Victor, without the latter having an idea of his designs, valuable information in regard to Bonaparte's movements, for d'Olonet was in constant intercourse with brother officers, and thus knew something of the arrangements of the consular household. But

before making his plans definitely, Anatole had several things to destroy or to dispose of. In his possession were lists of times and places, recipes for explosives, as well as correspondence with emigrated nobles that was highly incriminating to others besides himself. He felt that he must guard against anything falling into wrong hands in the event of failing in his purpose, or of his own destruction or arrest. If he should come to grief, the lot would fall on de Montfort—then on de Boissy. On d'Olonet? No, Heaven forbid! Anatole shivered at the very thought. The desire not to implicate this cherished friend was at least a vulnerable spot in his utter unscrupulousness.

As he calmly thought out the situation, he concluded not to trust such papers as he wished to preserve out of his own hands until the very last moment, and in the meantime to make away with the rest without delay. The other men were so rash; and they talked too much, particularly when they had been drinking. It would be easy to remove a tile in the floor of his room and to hide beneath it such things as he wished to keep. It could be fastened down again, and no one would suspect the hiding-place. When the time came,

he would tell Gabrielle of its existence, and he would instruct her to wait for news of him; but if he did not come back or send word within a certain time, she was to remove them and faithfully deliver the package to whom it was addressed. That was his main purpose, and the details could be settled later. She would never know what the sealed parcel contained; and the work could still go on, the terrible machinery kept in motion by a young girl's hand. The danger to which she would be exposed he did not consider for a moment. He was sure of her, and that was all he required. "A woman like that who is in love is as faithful as—as a dog," he concluded. "And often she has not as much sense!"

Anatole worked until very late, for he was consumed with a feverish desire to put his affairs in order. He could not tell when his opportunity might come, and all should be in readiness. His dark purpose was fast becoming a monomania that haunted him by day and by night, and there was no relief like activity. Usually it was physical exertion that he craved; but at this time he felt that, unless he unloaded his mind in part of what was its burden by putting his personal concerns

in some kind of order, he should go mad. It was at least a present task that could be done, and anything was better than sitting still. There had been an expression on Victor's face when he had wished him good-night that had spoken of great content. Where had the boy found it? His own troubled brain was throbbing, and he longed for rest. He wished that everything were over. Even the pains of purgatory would be almost welcome were he but freed from this wearing load he was bearing; even the limitless, absolute nothingness of the "Nirvana" seemed like peace; and he hardly knew which he believed in.

Anatole had much to think of, and as the hours ticked away he glanced from time to time at the face of his watch as it lay on the table beside him. He had entanglements of various kinds. Perhaps there really was a lady; but if it were so, he sternly put away the thought. He had buried all such dreams forever when he had formed his irrevocable intentions. Other men might love: for him there was no such future. And yet his heart was soft that night. Those clinging arms, and the fervent kisses that had rained from Gabrielle's lips upon his hands, had touched him. Man is

human after all, and even wicked thoughts cannot still all other impulses. But when tender recollections dawn in such a life, they are like a glow of sunset behind lowering clouds. He meant no real harm to the girl—nothing worse than the crushing out of her brightest hopes; and he was too selfish and too utterly self-absorbed to deny himself the luxury of her affection or the usefulness of her devotion. What she might eventually suffer did not trouble him. He was a gentleman; she was a toy, a plaything, as he looked upon such things. Heaven forgive him!

And so he wrote, and pondered, and frowned; and all the while the girl, the plaything, lay in her white bed on the other side of the house, in a tremble of delight. Monsieur loved her, she thought; and she wore his ring. It was what gentlemen always gave to ladies when they were betrothed,—and he had promised to do everything for her. François Perin, from across the way, must cease to join her when she walked to mass with her parents on Sunday mornings. She could not imagine why her father thought him such a fine fellow. His hands were red and coarse, not at all like Monsieur's; and he was an altogether

common young butcher, with a rough voice that had no more music in it than a bass-drum. Monsieur's, on the contrary, was soft and gentle, and full of a melody that melts the heart. She lay in a transport of bliss and ignorance until she was lost at last in happy dreams. Honest Armand Gourtain, all unconscious of his daughter's frame of mind, was soon to reproach himself for having allowed her precocity to develop quickly by having formed the early habit of waiting on his guests. He would have done better to have left her longer with the good Sisters in the convent school.

That night the stars shone brightly over the great city; and men and women, good and bad, slept on, unmindful of the sentinel eyes above them. Even the nightly roamers of the streets hardly gave them a thought, or lifted their gaze above the earth and earthly things. Who ever does think constantly of the stars, or of the moon, or of the sun, or of most of the other daily and nightly gifts of beauty that are showered upon us until our contemplation of them becomes a habit, and they are taken as a matter of course? Exceptional natures think differently, but they are choice souls, that are in the minority. And yet the stars

come with a nightly message of hope, though the crowd passes and never lifts its eyes. Whenever the twinkling lights shed their mild radiance upon this weary, sin-laden but beautiful world of yet unimagined possibilities, it should be an augury of good, for they have been a sign of cheer ever since the time an unfailing beacon travelled across the eastern heavens as a sure guide to the hope of all mankind. And as they have served to point the way across wide and unknown seas, so have they also lifted their nocturnal lamps to be an inspiration to the mortal who looks above; but to find their light, one must gaze steadily on high. Down to us through the ages comes that heart-wringing cry of exceeding humanity that voiced Dante's own bitterness and tenderness—faith, and love, and hope; and through its course comes ever the punctuations of the stars, for each division of that immortal song ends with the radiant hope of starlight. Ah, me! shall we, too, emerge from troubles and perplexities of time and place, of private dismay or of national calamity, and strong of mind and firm of purpose, in spite sometimes of our own utter undoing, still look upward, still see the heavenly lights?

As Anatole rose from his work and stood at the window gazing out at their radiance, he was hardly conscious of their beauty, but somehow, as he watched them, the thought of old days filled his mind, and his heart was touched with gentle recollections. How often he and Victor had climbed into the turret windows of the chateau in Brittany, and had watched for their coming; how pleased they had been to see their reflection in the waters of the moat! D'Olonet's sister, Antoinette, had called them "heavenly candles," and she had learned their names faster than the boys had done. She had been quicker at everything than they had been, surpassing them in their studies as well as in music and dancing. What a change had come into his own life when he had been permitted to turn his back on his dull, lonely schoolroom at home, and to ride over daily to "Beaulieu" in order to study with the brother and sister there! Ah, Antoinette! It had not been for long, but while they had lasted those hours had been bright and sweet. And then, all at once, everything had changed. The storm-cloud broke, and she and her mother had been carried away with the tide of retreating Royalists. He won-

dered if she had grown up straight and fair, as she had given promise of doing. He had not thought of her for a long time. Why should he do so to-night? Simply because the starlight reflected from the bosom of a muddy puddle in the street had, by one of those mysterious tricks of memory, recalled the shining of the stars as they had been reflected from the encircling waters of the old castle in Brittany. Surely it was a rare pearl to have strayed so far.

Anatole continued to think of her, and he recalled their childish compact to one day wed each other. They had even exchanged rings, and he now mechanically felt for his. He had worn it all these years, latterly on his little finger, for he had been loath to let this link of the past go from him. He felt for it now in the dark, but it was gone. Then he remembered, with a sharp pang, that Gabrielle wore it now. The recollection of this vexed him, and yet he had barely thought of Antoinette for years. Why was he passing his life in review now, and why was his heart so pierced with pain?

When he had parted from his friend a few hours before, Victor had told him that he had been "in

Heaven." What had he meant by that? Where had he really been? His eyes were calm and clear, and when he spoke it had been in a voice both grave and tender. His face had looked gentler than Anatole had seen it of late, and his expression was as though he had breathed a prayer. Anatole tapped upon the window-pane, and gazed gloomily into the depths of the dark-blue vault, that lifted its dome over the populous city, whose feverish life now lay hushed in slumber. He was all alone; and, strange to say, he felt something like awe at the thought of his own solitude. The great towers of the cathedral lifted themselves upward and looked gigantic and solemn; and when the penetrating tones of the bells reached his ears, they sounded like a call from above. Anatole was really far from insensible to such influences, and he was quick to respond to the effect of his surroundings. He was by nature sensuous. He loved all exquisite things: the soft texture of silks and satins, the graces and luxuries of life. Fate had withheld much from him; but in spite of deprivations, the evidences of art still touched him as quickly as the contemplation of nature; and form and color were as satisfying to

his eye as music was calming to his senses. His palate called for the choicest viands and the finest wine, his sight for the loveliest women;—but Anatole's lines had fallen in hard places.

To-night he was feeling softened by the recollections of his young life. Even the horrid determination that perpetually occupied his thoughts could not altogether blot out his better nature. Beneath his hot blood there flowed a calmer stream. Few suspected the intensity of feeling of which he was capable; and yet, even as a boy, the passionate spring had been there. Once he had come home from riding in the forest on a spring day, when the newness of life had been in the air, and when the whole world rejoiced; and, unseen by any one but his Maker, he had flung himself down upon the turf, and out of the fulness of his heart he had thanked the Lord that the world was so beautiful. His soul was astir, but no one knew it; and a moment later he had become the reserved, dark-browed lad again. Perhaps Victor had felt something of this in his own tentative gropings for the secret of life, and in spite of their immaturity this had been one of the threads that had bound the two youths together.

Was Anatole d'Harcourt musing now over his past because he already saw the fading of his own life and the failure of his fixed purpose? "Antoinette, Antoinette, I loved you as a boy can love!" he murmured. "Antoinette, ah, Antoinette, I believe that I love you now! Antoinette, why do I dream of you? Is it because that first awakening of my boyish heart comes back to me to-night? I have seen so much of the world since the old days, Antoinette; so much of sorrow and disappointment, and of sin. Are you still fresh and sweet, and as untouched by such things as of old; and do you still love flowers, and starlight, and all beautiful things? Is your voice like Victor's? It used to be. Antoinette, give me back my youth and innocence! Antoinette, to-night, for the first time since I lost you, a young girl's tear has fallen on my hand. Ah, Antoinette, bring back my lost past!" he groaned.

But it was too late. His lot was already cast. He and his companions were committed to the doing of a foul deed; and upon the table before him lay the papers, a silent witness to their purpose. "For the King!" he muttered as he paced slowly

up and down the floor with his hands clasped behind his back. The room was in confusion; the bed was tumbled; the lights burned low. The stars glittered and looked in, unalterably steadfast in their shining; and as the conspirator turned toward them, he felt unspeakably lonely and weary. "For the King!" he repeated. "It is a righteous cause; what does it matter, then, if one or two of us fall?" He put his hand to his brow to ease the pain that throbbed in his temples and stupefied his brain, and then he fell upon his knees before a crucifix that hung to the bare wall. Dominated by fatigue as well as by the great stress of his emotions, he remained prostrated before the image, while his lips moved with the words of Latin prayers that he uttered again and again in unceasing repetition, clinging tenaciously to this act of faith as a last means of grace. It was as though he would wring from Heaven its protection upon the distorted form of duty and loyalty that he had imposed upon himself. He became dazed as he continued to kneel on the comfortless tiles, while the inarticulate beseeching hung on his dry, white lips; and the cold, gray dawn crept in at last and found him there with the chill perspiration start-

ing from his forehead, and with his hands clasped tightly. As his eyes closed, they had retained the impression of the crucified One as He hung above him with thorn-crowned brow; and as the time silently sped away, it seemed at last to the kneeling sinner that the compassionate eyes turned toward him mildly and that the face smiled. And then it also was as though the wooden figure moved and became imbued with life, while its eyes still remained fastened upon him. And in that strange and shadowy fashion, in which nothing comes to us in our waking hours, a form of gentle aspect stood at his side, and it bore the same features as those of the Man who had hung on the cross. It faded away and came again, and d'Harcourt stretched out his hands toward it in supplication; and all at once, the vision appeared to materialize, and he fancied that he heard the low, sweet notes of a voice as pure and tender as the tones of far-off solemn music. "My son," it said, "what wouldst thou do? Pause and think, and love thy enemies." As it spoke the figure came and laid a finger on Anatole's forehead. The touch was icy cold; and, with a start, he opened his eyes. Overcome by heavy slumber, he had fallen forward until he

had touched with his face the chill tiles on the floor.

Gathering himself together, he shivered, and got upon his feet, and passed his hands over his eyes.

"I must have been dreaming," said Anatole.

CHAPTER VI.

A WHOLE week passed away, and still Victor had not gone near Madeleine, held back perhaps by some indescribable feeling of shyness, a most unaccountable thing for him, who was usually anything but backward in his intercourse with women. Anatole had him in his power and led him as he willed; for though he kept his eye upon the younger man, even cautioning him at times to be more careful of both health and money, his own example did not carry out the precept, and Victor gave himself but little rest as he followed the lead of his close companion. From time to time, however, a feeling akin to shame came over him as he sat at the card-table flushed with wine. What would Madeleine say could she see him?

Anatole had kept to himself all suggestion of his long night of distress and emotion, but Victor fancied that he grew more haggard and worn as the time passed, and that he also became increasingly cynical. Thus the days took their flight and

d'Olonet led his usual heedless life, though in the background of his thoughts there remained the remembrance of something better.

Once as he and his friend were walking through the streets of what is called to-day "the other side of the Seine," they passed the open door of the old church of St. Etienne du Mont, and they paused a moment before the entrance, attracted by the passing show of a bridal procession. The lovely tower of the building stood in relief against the gray sky, and rose high above the steeply pitched gable of the edifice, looking like some slender guard who kept the strangely composed but peculiarly picturesque church in its keeping; and as the door swung back to admit the festal company beneath its protecting shadow, Victor noticed that the bride was blushing with happiness as she clung to her escort, and that she glanced up shyly at him when she stepped daintily across the threshold in her satin shoes. The party was of the middle class and very small, but it came like a streak of brightness on a dull day, and the girl's look of absolute beatitude remained photographed on the young man's mind.

"Let us go in," said Anatole. "They tell me

that the *quêteuse* for the alms to-day is simply lovely."

"A pretty woman is always worth seeing," answered Victor carelessly, as they also passed beneath the portal.

The interior of St. Etienne du Mont is more than usually pleasing, and it fills one at once with a delightful sense of well-being, that is the essential quality in the atmosphere of any surrounding to cause one to feel in sympathy with, and to be at home in its environment. The architecture is open and penetrable, the clerestory is in proportion low, and there are frequent lights from painted windows; while the unique and graceful spiral staircases that wind about the columns on each side of the beautiful rood-screen, lend a character that is all its own. As the young men entered they both touched the asperges-brush held out to them, and they crossed themselves; then they passed on into the nave. The lingering fragrance of incense lay on the air, here and there burned a light. The glint of the bride's veil showed whitely in the distance, but the murmur of the priest's consecrating voice did not reach to where they stood. Over everything there lay a hush that

made the turmoil and bustle of the world seem far away; but in spite of this sacred quiet, even as Anatole bent his knee before the altar, his roving eye sought for what he was in quest of, and as Victor turned toward him, he saw at the same moment the woman upon whom the other's insolent stare was fastened.

She was apparently absorbed in her devotions and entirely unconscious of the presence of other worshipers; and as d'Olonet's eye fell on her he caught the line of her profile, and he noticed the color of her abundant locks that recalled a vision of something seen once before, and he started. No one in the world but Madeleine could possess that wonderful hair; and as he moved a few steps nearer to satisfy himself, he saw that it was really she. The light from behind touched her tresses into an aureole, as she knelt on her low *prie-dieu.* Her eyes were downcast, and she held between her clasped hands a rosary besides a velvet bag for the alms. She was absolutely motionless except for the inaudible movement of her lips, and the slight motion by which an occasional bead dropped from her fingers. Her face was sad—so profoundly sorrowful that Victor imagined that he

read there all her past woe, and a rush of warm feeling filled his heart.

"How beautiful she is! To have such a woman pray for one should save a man from any evil," he thought.

He could not bear to have Anatole look at her in the critical, unreverential manner that he had assumed. He would have examined a picture, or a jewel, or a horse even, in just the same way. It was like a sacrilege; and d'Olonet dragged him away almost fiercely to another part of the church.

"Eh? but she is pretty, the little *quêteuse*," said his companion flippantly. "I wonder if she is doing penance for her sins."

There was nothing "little" about Madeleine, mentally or physically. To Victor she was absolutely the most queenly of all the women he had ever seen. Her quiet dignity, and calm gentle strength, had affected him like the peace of a heaven's Sabbath after the feverish existence of the world. His feeling for her amounted to veneration, she seemed to him so pure and high, so far removed from ordinary mortals; and he resented Anatole's tone. When the latter continued to scrutinize her appearance, and proceeded to

coolly comment upon her magnificent hair, Victor could have strangled him.

"Do you know her?" d'Harcourt asked in surprise. "A man is free to look at whom he likes; and any one who takes up the alms publicly must not expect to go unobserved. *Mon Dieu!* her beauty alone is enough to bring into her white hands many a gold bit that is dull in comparison with that glorious auburn hair of hers. It is wonderful! Did you say that you had ever seen her before? What is her name?"

"I have met mademoiselle," answered Victor quietly, but in a tone that admitted of no discussion. "Come away. It is unseemly to stare at any lady who is busy with her devotions."

Anatole only raised his eyebrows and pursed his lips, but whatever other faults he had, he was at least not indiscreet, so he followed his friend without a word.

Victor's heart beat quickly, for the sight of Madeleine had brought back with extraordinary clearness the remembrance of the one evening he had passed with her, and he longed to hear her voice again; but at the same time he felt the strongest disinclination to allow Anatole D'Har-

court to meet his Madonna-like acquaintance. He knew that his aristocratic comrade scorned the *bourgeoisie*, and that if he discovered the station in life to which she belonged, he would be sure to speak of it in the scoffing tones he was an adept in using, and would undoubtedly reproach Victor for forming friends of inferior social station. D'Olonet was certain that if such slighting words came to his ears, he would be quite capable of knocking the speaker down. Anatole carried things rather too far for the times in which they lived.

As they turned to go, Victor felt that he was excited as well as irritated by the other's bearing; but he bit his lip and said nothing. On their way out his eye fell on old Thérèse, Madeleine's maid, and he recognized her at once, for it had been she who had carried in the tea on the evening of his visit to the Bertrands. She, too, was kneeling but a few paces behind her lady; and beside her on the stone pavement stood a basket of roses. She was not too abstracted by her religious duty to be unaware of the notice Madeleine had attracted; and she glanced up stealthily from beneath her wrinkled eyelids. Though her lips were moving, her attention was quite alert, and

Victor saw at once that she not only knew who he was, but that she was watching both him and D'Harcourt closely. He was willing to propitiate her, and at the same time to satisfy a sudden desire of his own. He therefore lagged behind his friend, in order to slip a coin in the old woman's hand.

"Give me one of your flowers," he said in a low, persuasive voice, "and be sure to tell your mistress that it was I who asked for it."

"Mademoiselle takes them to the poor in the hospital. Will monsieur rob *les pauvres?*"

"*Mon Dieu!* There are none who need them more than I," he murmured with a half uttered bitter laugh, as he helped himself.

This episode had by no means escaped Anatole's observation, and he looked at his companion sharply as they both stepped out into the open air. D'Olonet seemed moved and his young face was flushed, but he was absolutely silent. They walked on together thus for some moments, each one busy with his own thoughts, but Victor carefully shielded his rose from the wind that was freshly blowing; and being obviously in an uncommunicative frame of mind, his friend forbore

to ask him any questions, although his own curiosity was alert. Hitherto, his influence had been paramount, but it occurred to him now that another and a gentler one was at work.

The air was mild, for the days of early April were already giving promise of vernal sweetness, in spite of an occasional one that was yet damp and ungenial; but Victor, rendered sensitive by the low condition of his system, still wore a heavy coat, though he often left it unfastened. As the flush of color died out of his cheeks he looked paler than ever, and the chills that were so constantly sapping his strength, returned to make him shiver, and he shook slightly as he buttoned his garment now more closely across his chest.

"Why, man, your teeth are chattering," exclaimed d'Harcourt, "and you are as pale as a ghost! Come with me and take a glass of something that will stir your blood. You have no business to feel cold on a day like this unless you are really ill."

So Anatole drew him within the doors of the first café they passed and called for wine; and cheered by its warmth and distracted by his companion's rattling conversation, Victor d'Olonet

allowed the golden hours of the spring morning to slip away unheeded; but his first care upon sitting down had been to call for a *carafe* of water, into which he stuck Madeleine's rose. Its fragrance came to him like a faint whisper from the voice of his better nature, and it told him that there was still something in life worth living for that was sweet and pure; and moved also by his own innately refined nature, that began at last to assert itself, he questioned the satisfaction to be derived from the life he had been lately leading. He was at last beginning to be true to himself.

Anatole mixed his own sugar and water and added the approved portion of something stronger, and Victor looked at him across the table as a mist gathered before his own eyes, and his head ached with such an excruciating pain that the words of the other's conversation only came to him indistinctly. The white-aproned waiters moved over the sawdust-covered floor, voices rose and fell, the muffled rumble from the streets came through the window, and the fragrance of the flower on the table mingled with the fumes from Anatole's glass. Victor knew that the latest issue of The *Moniteur* lay before him. As in a dream, he

heard his companion read from it of the impending trial of the plotters supposed to be in collusion with Cadoudal. He knew that d'Harcourt was frowning as he went on, and that his voice sounded harsh, and that his steel-blue eyes flashed from under his dark eyebrows; but the distracting torment in his own head made him indifferent to everything else, and all he wished for was the quiet of his lonely room.

One cannot lead a reckless life with impunity, and Victor had reached the end of his endurance. Instead of going to visit Madeleine the following day, as he had determined to do from the moment he had caught sight of her in the old church, the very next morning saw him prostrated with an attack of fever, while the racking pain in his bones prevented him from even caring to leave his bed. He lay there alone in his bare room, absolutely uncomfortable and totally uncared for, until Anatole, coming in toward evening, found him almost unconscious. The lad's condition seemed so alarming to the inexperienced man that he sent at once for a Sister of Charity to come and watch beside his friend. He was utterly helpless himself, and wandered aimlessly about the room or stood in

deep dejection at the foot of the bed as he gazed at the sufferer, who tossed about and talked incoherently as his mind wandered through the mazes of his distress. Anatole was positively in the way, and the nurse, in despair over his clumsy efforts, begged him to send for a doctor and to leave the patient in her care alone. Then she lit a night-lamp and settled down to her professional and solitary vigil.

Victor was very ill. Those many hours of neglect had told upon him, and he had lost all consciousness of his real surroundings. But, through the ravings of the fever that was burning him up, he still gave evidence of being half aware of his condition, and the sense of something left unaccomplished constantly troubled him. As he tossed and turned upon his uneasy couch, the names of both Bertrand and his sister were continually on his lips; and his caretaker, as well as Anatole, who returned early in the morning, were completely bewildered by his rambling talk of roses. The poor invalid imagined himself walking among them; and in his delirium he fancied that he was picking them, sometimes in the chateau garden at home, and sometimes in the conservatory in Paris.

It was all perfectly vague, and to d'Harcourt totally unreasonable, though, with one of those chance shots at truth that often go straight to the mark, he had in his own mind connected Victor's mysterious allusions with the striking-looking penitent that they had come upon in the gray aisle of St. Etienne du Mont. He knew absolutely nothing about illness, and was promptly reduced to despair in regard to his friend. He never left him, but sat beside the bed hour after hour as he pondered upon what ought to be done. The nurse he had picked up proved to be entirely inefficient and dozed away most of her time, apparently considering her professional presence in itself sufficient; and the physician, -who was a busy man, came and went quickly twice a day. He left his orders, and seeing that the patient was not alone, supposed that his directions were properly carried out. It came to pass, therefore, that between them all poor Victor was wofully slighted, and suffered for what he was most in need of—careful and intelligent watching.

One day there came a knock at the door, and when it was opened Isidore Bertrand entered. He

had missed his client, and yielding to a vague feeling of uneasiness, he had followed him up. From the very first he had felt strongly drawn to the young officer, and it had really worried the lawyer to know that Victor was so disregardful of his own good. This concern was entirely gratuitous on the part of the much-occupied man of affairs, but its existence was clear; and coupled with it was a self-imposed feeling of responsibility. The remembrance of his visitor's white face, with the feverish flush that had come and gone, had remained to haunt the busy advocate's mind, and would not be dispelled. The young fellow's eye had been too clear, his bearing too self-contained and manly, not to win confidence; and Bertrand, who was a good judge of men, had felt convinced that his client had fallen into doubtful hands, but that he was intrinsically true and worthy of better things. This conviction had been growing ever since the first time that they had been thrown together, and the impression had been strengthened by the more intimate relations that had existed between them during their short social intercourse. The professional man liked the callow officer, and when Isidore Bertrand de-

termined to be one's friend, he could be depended upon.

His quick eye now took everything in at a glance as he opened the sick man's door; and coming to a conclusion rapidly, as was his habit, his plan was formed without loss of time.

"I will send Madeleine," he said.

Thus, when Victor came to himself after that long period of distress, the first thing that he saw was the spring sunshine falling on a mass of roses that filled a blue vase standing between the sashes of the double window; and then letting his eyes follow the bright rays of light, they came upon the Bertrand's servant Thérèse sitting calmly at the foot of his bed, with her hands folded in her lap. The inattentive professional had gone, and the room was neat and filled with an intangible but pervading sensation of comfort that it had not known before. There was no sound save the ticking of the clock and the low hiss of a steaming kettle on the fire. The maid's white cap glistened like freshly fallen snow, and on her spotless apron lay a ball of yarn with the knitting-needles stuck through it ready for use. She was apparently there for nothing but to wait upon him. He was

too tired to think it all out, but he knew that he was being cared for, and in a perfectly satisfying way he felt that this care was coming from Madeleine; and so, with a sigh of content, he fell asleep again, and when he awoke he was much better.

CHAPTER VII.

During the long days that followed Victor saw Madeleine frequently. Sometimes she came with her brother, sometimes she called with her maid, but she never appeared alone; and whenever Thérèse accompanied her, she always carried a small basket of luxuries; and while her mistress watched, she became engaged in the preparation of invalid delicacies. For some time Victor was too weak to talk much, but he learned to listen for Madeleine's light step, and he loved to follow her with his eyes as she moved about the room, putting everything to rights, and giving the womanly touches to his surroundings that are potent to transform any chaos of disorder into a haven of rest.

He came to know each turn of her stately neck, and the soft rustle of her garments soothed him like music. Once or twice he tried to thank her, but she would let him say nothing, and with gentle insistence urged upon him the necessity of repose; and he was quite satisfied to lie still and

do as she wished. At last he was able to listen while she read to him, and once, in response to his earnest request, she sang again the song of the awakening year.

"Le temps a laissie son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye."

The spring had really come at last. Its sweetness was flooding the world; and Victor felt, as he slowly groped his way back to health and strength, that he too was arousing from a long winter that had been to him a period of loneliness and neglect. He longed for the time to come when he might be alone with his benefactress; and he determined that he would ask her to help him keep out of the wild life for which, however, he experienced a sudden distaste. The voice still went on:

"Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent, en livrée jolie,
Gouttes d'argent d'orfévrerie,
Chascun s'abille de nouveau:
Le temps a laissie son manteau."

He turned his face to the wall, but Madeleine did not see that his eyes were wet.

As the days lengthened and the patient grew

stronger, her visits became less frequent, and at last they ceased entirely. While he was helpless she had been glad to come, but the situation changed when his eager eyes looked at her pleadingly, and he could no longer be restrained from murmuring the expression of his gratitude. His fervor evidently disconcerted her. The time had come for him to depend upon the attentions of the maid who still visited him daily.

Anatole's constant presence in the sick room had also complicated matters, and had made Madeleine feel from the very first that his was a nature with which she could never live in harmony, and she had been inspired at once with a shrinking from him. He had recognized her, with considerable surprise, as the lady they had come upon in church on the morning of the day upon which Victor had been taken ill, and his curiosity would not rest until he had established her identity. When he discovered that the lovely *quêteuse* was simply the sister of his friend's man of business, and not some lady of high degree, his lip curled, for he disapproved of d'Olonet's democratic associations. During the enforced intercourse to which Madeleine and Anatole were sub-

jected, the latter was persistently ceremonious and polite, not to say attentive; but there was that in the expression of his cold blue eyes that made her shrink from him, and his smile even seemed to her to be touched with what was sinister. Being thrown with her under peculiar circumstances, he soon discovered what he fancied had attracted Victor, and d'Harcourt was by no means insensible himself to her charming personality in spite of his own prejudices; but Madeleine's attitude toward himself was unapproachably cold and distant though absolutely courteous, and he knew that any attempt at familiarity on his part would be an impossibility. To do him justice, in this instance he felt no inclination for gallantry, and even admitted an unwilling admiration for her in spite of his disdain of the whole *bourgeois* class. There was something about her that impelled this homage; but it would have been as easy to approach Minerva herself, as to bestow upon this unbending regent of the sick room any mark of the approbation that he always felt for a handsome woman in any class of life whatever, and which he was not usually slow in disclosing.

Her calm, and to him totally unbending de-

meanor, attracted him greatly, though it still held him at a distance; and yet more, he was impressed with a species of unacknowledged awe, which he resented and was, however, unable to resist. Her individuality permeated the whole interior of the apartment like the penetrating sweetness of the soft spring air; and even the cynic was touched, for he knew that, though an impassable gulf lay between themselves, she could be gentleness itself to others, and he could not but feel that Victor was blessed to have her care. His own feelings were therefore contradictory; but she had one unwavering sensation—and that was that she distrusted him.

"She brings in with her," he said one day to Victor, "a whole cathedral's atmosphere of peace and quiet; but I verily believe that it would take the fire of the tropics to melt your snow-pure goddess. Where did you find such a queen-like lady, and why does this golden chestnut-haired divinity waste her pains upon a poor little officer of the Consulate, who is now harvesting a whole crop of wild oats?"

He spoke jestingly, but he was in reality piqued at her utter indifference to himself.

Victor sat in his armchair by the window and was lost in thought. He was still too feeble for prolonged effort of any kind; and book, or gazette, or *feuilleton* would drop from his long, white fingers, as he looked out of doors and rejoiced in the rejuvenating sunshine, and listened to the twitter of the sparrows. His window was filled with growing plants, and far below him in the street he could hear the cry of the flower-venders as they trundled their bright wares to the market. The sound of life was borne up to him as it flowed ceaselessly through the arteries of the great city; and when the door-like panes were thrown back to admit the air, the cheerful bustle was inspiriting and quite distinct from what arose from the mud and slush deluged streets of winter. It was as though the whole world were moving on, and he alone had stood still.

Every day Anatole brought to him a nosegay twisted into a huge sheet of white paper, and the flowers were always the best that the market afforded. There were the saffron-colored crocus, as well as daffodils and fragrant hyacinths, to gladden his eyes; and the scent of the blossoms filled him with tender recollections. And every

morning a youth who had driven his goats all the way from the Pyrenees, in the hope of sure profit from Parisian custom, paused by d'Harcourt's orders, with his long-haired, shaggy friends, beneath the invalid's window, and played a tune on his reed pipe. Then Anatole descended to fetch with his own hands the bowl of fresh bubbling milk that his convalescing charge found so invigorating; and Jehannot, the goat-herd, never failed to wave his flat *beret* as he disappeared around the corner with his flock, and to call back gayly: "*À demain, monsieur.*"

Anatole used to feel in one pocket for the coin that was to pay for the strengthening drink, and in the other for the paper filled with coarse gray salt, with which he loved to feed the animals as they crowded about him, bleating and thrusting their nibbling muzzles in his hands. It was a strange spectacle to see the dark-browed man so occupied, but simple things often pleased him. And once, over the cover of the bowl, there lay a bunch of wood violets. "Yesterday was Sunday," explained the goat-driver in his southern accent, that sounded quite unusual to Parisian ears, and he smiled so that he showed his white teeth, "and

I drove the creatures out of the city for a crop of fresh grass. It was then that I plucked the flowers. *Bons souhaits pour le guérison de monsieur.*"

Victor and Anatole had lost sight of the others of their company during these days. Several young officers had creaked up the narrow stairs in their heavy boots and had whispered at the door; de Montfort had knocked and had left messages, but d'Harcourt would admit no one; and his solicitude for his friend banished for the moment all other considerations, though his own dark plans were not really forgotten. He hung over his charge with a jealous care, and his resentment of *bourgeois* interference soon gave way to profound gratitude. As time progressed, however, this changed to chagrin, for do what he would, he was unable to advance a step toward nearer relations with Madeleine, and it irritated him to see that she continued to almost avoid him.

Three weeks had passed, and they were still complete strangers to each other; and when she no longer came to nurse her patient, Anatole discovered, to his own intense annoyance, that he could not expel her from his thoughts, and that the sick room seemed almost empty. As for

Isidore, he detested him in a way that he barely disguised. This the lawyer fully reciprocated, but he managed, with perfectly unruffled temper, to transfix the other with trenchant speeches that were so politely worded that open offence was impossible. They cordially disliked each other, but personal antipathy was curbed on the neutral ground of Victor's chamber; and though it infuriated the nobleman to be forced to accept indirect favors, he had still found it impossible to remove himself from the fascination of Madeleine's presence, while now that she had gone, the void that she left made him, for the first time, fully realize how completely she had filled the room before. He would have been surprised had he known in just what way he had affected her, and would certainly not have been flattered. She declared that there was something of the glitter of the serpent's eye in his glance, and though she constantly tried to shake off its influence, it still possessed a power that held her enchained and made her feel most uncomfortable. She never felt at her ease when he was near.

Anatole came and went—tall, dark, graceful, and aristocratic in his bearing; and whenever he bent

his searching look upon her she shivered, but she knew not why. It was thus a strange party that had gathered together beneath the modest roof of Victor's lodging, and of them all, he was the one who gave the least thought to outside things. The others snatched the time they passed there from lives that were filled with various aims; he was like a ship that had come to port and had dropped anchor. However, as strength returned, he began also to long for something else, and the desire for renewed activity made itself felt. This feeling, but half recognized at first, grew steadily after Madeleine's visits ceased, and during the tedious hours of his convalescence he thought of her continually.

And on his gentle lady's part he was by no means forgotten, and her thoughts dwelt constantly on the invalid she had nursed, though now her place was taken by a substitute. The weeks that had gone had left a deep impress on her mind and had touched her very nearly; there had been something so pathetic in the young officer's condition. He had been extremely docile and patient, and she had been strongly drawn to him from the first, giving him the affection that one is apt to

feel for what is dependent on one's care, until at last, she learned to be more and more interested in his present, and also became concerned for his future. Thus a certain intimacy was established, the roots of which lay in the unusual circumstance that had brought them together; but while his feeling for her approached worship, her strongest one for him was still that of commiseration, though she missed him more than she had thought possible. Her patient care had been a matter of course, and she had tended him just as she might have one of her own young brothers, and she worried about him much in the same way that she would have done for them; and thinking of him affectionately, she at the same time longed to help him. She pitied the lad with all the strength of her noble heart; and the possibility of the young life going to waste had filled her with unspeakable regret, and she resolved that when he was once more able to live as usual in the world, something must be done to make him realize its dangers. Victor's personality was most appealing; and unknown to herself, a tiny seed had already been sown in her heart that was to bear much fruit. But she was unaware of this as yet, and her attitude toward him

was almost motherly. She felt so much older—ah! so much older than her charge—that her solicitude had been protective from the beginning, and the care and thought of others had been the habit of her life. This maternal instinct made her forget that she was a young woman and he a young man, after all: and that she was his senior by only two years! Bertrand had done a dangerous thing when he had sent her to care for the young Count in his desolation.

Women usually mature earlier than men, and her naturally earnest disposition had been developed and deepened by all she had suffered; and while Victor's sorrows had made him reckless, hers had but moulded her character into strength and gentleness: but there was the same current of absolute sincerity in them both, and, their natures coming into juxtaposition, they met as affinities. He had seemed very young indeed to her as she had looked at his handsome boyish face, and, with a positive feeling of tenderness, she determined to try and keep him from wrong. She knew that he had been wild; she even guessed that it had been easy to lead him into forbidden paths; but she forgave him this weakness, for she never for a

moment doubted his own assertion that the d'Olonets had always been "brave and true." His undisciplined habits of life would pass. Thus, with an unexplained combination of indulgence and growing affection, she came to regard him in the light of a younger brother at last, and she felt inclined to help him just as she was always ready with head or hand to assist Réné and Gaspard when they came home from the Lycée full of their schemes, that demanded her help and sympathy. "Poor fellow, he must marry and settle down in a home of his own," she thought; and in her great compassion, she was ready to place his hand in that of the first maiden of noble lineage who should appear. She told herself that this would give her pleasure, but she did not fully understand her own sensitive nature, and failed to recognize the birth of a deeper feeling that was already alive in her heart. That his natural associations would claim Victor again she never doubted. For herself and family things were different, and she supposed that in the course of time she and Isidore would gradually lose sight of their aristocratic friend.

So Madeleine calmly tended her roses and

waited, with her heart full of kindness; but she was often lost in thought, and a sad smile hovered about her lips.

During all this time the tavern on the other side of the river had held an anxious and troubled heart. Gabrielle saw Anatole come and go from the *Sapin Vert*, and as she watched him she noticed that his face was often clouded and that his brows were drawn. Sometimes he hurriedly ran upstairs and after a rapid change of toilet went out again, walking quickly toward that part of the city that was separated from their own quarter by the River Seine. He rarely took the time to speak to her; and when he did so, though his words were usually kind, he was so visibly preoccupied that what he said gave her but little satisfaction. In vain she decked herself out in her best; in vain she waited to waylay him as he came in and out, hoping to win him back by her pretty pouting ways, and the ready tears that he had once been so ready to kiss away. She even held up her hand when he passed, so that the candle-light might fall on the gold ring that he had given her; but it never caught his eye, and he took no note of anything that she said or did. Gabrielle's heart grad-

ually filled with pain, then with jealousy and despair; and she began at last to think that, after all, the stories she had heard were true, and that the attentions of gentlemen to poor girls meant nothing. "And yet," she pondered, "if it were not for that fine lady who lives somewhere near the Tuileries and the Louvre, quite far from here, he would sometimes think of me. He used to be so kind, and he has often said that he knew no eyes so bright or cheeks so red as mine."

As Gabrielle brooded over her trouble, it gradually dawned upon her that certainty would, at any rate, be better than the present wearing anxiety; and she determined that she would find out who the lady was. She felt that she must see her for herself and discover if the woman of quality was really so beautiful that the remembrance of her own neat figure could be completely blotted out of d'Harcourt's mind. That her own appearance was attractive she knew very well; and she fully appreciated her charms as she often stood and complacently gazed into the mirror, smoothing out the wrinkles in her short-waisted gown, twisting over her finger the rebellious ringlets that had strayed from their fastenings, and giving to her

apparel quick, deft touches, that showed each fold or ribbon to the best advantage. And she used to stand on tiptoe upon a cricket, and turn herself about in order to get a better view of her back in the long looking-glass of that tiny railed-in office of the taproom. She admired herself sincerely, and could not understand Anatole's forgetfulness.

The feeling of unrest grew upon her until she could no longer control her impulse to see for herself the charmer who held the recreant d'Harcourt in her toils. He had evaded Gabrielle's inquiries before, and she was too proud to ask again; and so, jumping to a conclusion, like many a rash maiden before her, she built up a fabrication of circumstances that really only existed in her imagination. Much cogitation fostered this impression; and one day, after she had seen him start out, she quickly threw an apron over her glossy black locks and followed him at a distance, her heart beating violently as a trip-hammer the while, and her cheeks glowing like two pink camellias. She felt exactly as she had done on the night when she had waited for him on the stairs, except that now the feeling had grown, and added to it there was a greater spice of jealousy.

She was dreadfully afraid that he would see her, and she frequently paused, panting, behind some news-kiosk or tree whenever she inadvertently came too near; and then, her fear allayed, she hastened on again in her anxiety not to lose sight of him in the crowd. Once she ran into a huge water-carrier, a peasant from the Auvergne, and she heard his coarse voice swearing at her as she fled from the cascade of water that poured from the tub strapped to his shoulders when she had made him stumble. A seller of honey, carrying a golden pile on a platter that he balanced nicely on his head, shouted with glee and clapped his hands as she escaped, and pointed after her with arms encased in white covers that matched the freshness of his long apron and cap. A boy from the pastry-cook's, still crunching a succulent stolen morsel, exploded in a burst of merriment, and an urchin sitting on the curb with his feet in the gutter called out in the *argot* of the slums, as he gave vent to his admiration of her agility. Last of all, a bronzed veteran from the wars, who stood lazily leaning against a wall, added his word to the chorus of amusement as he pulled his gray whiskers and his gaunt shoulders shook. There

is something so childish in the French nature that the veriest trifle is apt to wake their sense of humor.

Fearful lest the noise would attract Anatole's attention, and yet in terror of losing him, she hastened on without looking behind, in her confusion nearly falling beneath the wheels of a passing *fiacre*. But he had heard nothing, and went on his way quickly without turning his head; and she, rendered more careful by experience, kept at a judicious distance as she followed him swiftly, with her eyes fixed steadily on his drab coat. They were just passing in front of the Tour St. Jacques, when she saw him suddenly stop and look up; and at the same moment a lady approached, followed by her maid, who carried a basket the top of which was carefully covered with a white cloth. The lady was Madeleine, and she was coming back with Thérèse from an errand in a distant part of the city.

When Gabrielle first caught sight of the couple, she noticed the masses of beautiful hair that adorned the lady's head, and she saw that it shone in the clear light like red gold. The innkeeper's daughter was instantly impressed with her stateli-

ness and grace, and was also attracted by her pleasant smile, and would undoubtedly have admired the newcomer greatly had she not seen d'Harcourt step forward and greet her with a look of pleasure that spoke volumes to the lynx-eyed watcher. That was enough. She felt convinced at once that she had found what she was in quest of, and, closing her white teeth so tightly over her red lip that the blood started, she waited with every sense alert.

A word or two passed between the man and woman, but Gabrielle could not hear what was said. The lady apparently gave her consent to something asked, for Anatole turned and walked on beside her. He seemed to be on familiar terms even with the maid, for he nodded to her carelessly. Then the three went on, and Gabrielle could see that the lady and her escort were talking together earnestly. Victor lived not far from the Louvre, in one of the streets that run beside the Palais Royal, and his friends were on their way to him, so the trio soon turned out of the more crowded thoroughfare and entered a narrower one. The girl followed only a few steps behind, and saw when they rang

at the door of a rather dismal-looking house. Presently they were admitted by a red-bonneted *concierge*, and all three disappeared inside the entrance.

Gabrielle stood alone in the street and took careful note of the building, and as she did so her eyes retained the vision of the retreating figures; and the remembrance of the woman with the chestnut-colored locks coming to her with extraordinary distinctness, she felt herself choking with rage.

"Ah!" she cried, shaking her fist at the closed door, "I have found you at last—you who are within, where I may not enter! If you are beautiful, so am I! We shall see who shall win. Of course he will marry the lady—but he loved me once, and he shall love me again!"

She drew his ring from off her finger, and in her anger she would have thrown it away, but his words came back to her with pregnant force: "Remember, it is our pledge," and she slowly replaced it.

How little she knew! At that very moment Madeleine was saying to Anatole, stiffly: "If monsieur will kindly leave us, my servant and I will

watch. He may return and take charge in the afternoon, when we will leave."

He looked at her across the foot of Victor's bed. The patient lay with closed eyes and disturbed, feverish breathing.

"Kindly depart, monsieur," repeated the low, sweet voice, "and do not talk, for noise will trouble his rest, and sleep is imperative."

She stood there, straight as a young pine-tree, merciful as a Sister of Charity in her virginal purity, as unbending as a goddess of light; and the wearied man of the world, sated with sights and sounds of every kind of dissipation, full of the importance of his own aristocratic but decadent race, bowed silently before this daughter of the *bourgeoisie*, and left the room obediently without even looking back at the Madonna-like face. By the time he reached the street Gabrielle had gone, and she was walking back to the *Sapin Vert* with an energy that attracted the attention of the passers-by. She felt angry, and she looked it; and the gentler feelings that could refine her face having died out, the coarseness of her descent showed in the indelicate lines of her mouth, and in her commonplace beauty born alone of good health and

youth. The tip-tilted nose, that gave her a certain piquant expression, now appeared simply pert. The prettiness of the soubrette was veiled.

That very day Anatole d'Harcourt had thought: "Poor little Gabrielle! I have almost forgotten her of late. I must try and scrape some bits of silver together and buy her a present. My mind has been so full of Victor I have had no time for her—and *foi de gentilhomme!* that Mlle. Bertrand dazzles one with her queen-like beauty." He forgot all about his intention presently; and though the kind thought had been there, Gabrielle never had cognizance of it, and remained unmollified.

This all happened during the first fortnight of Victor's illness, and by the time he was convalescent and able to go out, she had nursed her wrath and jealousy until their proportions had greatly increased; but as yet she had done nothing but keep up her furtive watch on Anatole.

CHAPTER VIII.

VICTOR improved so rapidly that by the first day of May he was able to call on the Bertrands. He was accompanied by Anatole, who declared that the invalid was still too weak to walk there alone. As they threaded their way through the busy streets, it seemed to d'Olonet that they had never been so full of life and movement before. Fresh from the seclusion of his own quiet room, the stir at first confused him, and proved how far from strong he really was. He enjoyed it, though, and drew in long, deep draughts of the outside air; and his eye brightened as he felt himself once more about to take his place in the tumult of existence.

Uniforms mingled freely with the wearers of civilian dress; the sound of drum and fife was continually heard, and flags fluttered and waved. There was a constant coming and going, an overflowing energy and activity, and superabundant gayety of sight and sound, that was very inspiring;

and the sun, shining in clear skies, poured a flood of radiant yellow light over the Tuileries gardens, and lay peacefully on the gray walls that had enclosed so much history of a frightful kind. Paris was alert: art, letters, building, were all receiving a new impulse, and the glitter of returning brilliancy and glory acted like a tonic upon the volatile people.

That spring the rumbling of great events was in the air, and it was confidently asserted that the "First Consul for Life" was about to assume the imperial dignity. A motion was actually presented in the Tribunate on April 30th—although Bonaparte had already made a feint of declining the honor—and when put to the vote, met with very little opposition. The principles of the Republic and the Directory had indeed been radically changed, and the Consulate had steadily altered the face of everything. In the event of a new court, it was inevitable that social distinctions should become even more confused than they were, and the ambition of many aspiring commoners was aroused by the prospect. The great event that was to satisfy many ambitions, though already in the near future, had approached so gradually that

most of the people who might have taken alarm shortly before were now only pleased. Already the simplicity of earlier manners had given way to another order of things, and at the Tuileries and at St. Cloud a rigorous etiquette was observed. Much state was used at official functions, which were held with an ever-increasing formality. Liveried servants were in waiting at every corner of the palaces, and Josephine already presided at receptions in a manner that was almost regal. Her victorious husband was the cynosure of all eyes. From the moment when, before the Church of St. Roch, he had turned the cannon on the howling mob, expectant France had waited for him, and she had not been disappointed, while a merciful Providence still veiled from all eyes the carnage and disaster of the future. It was freely said that the impending Empire was to be but the exaggeration of the Consulate.

In 1800, Louis had written from his exile that he had need of Bonaparte to restore order in France and himself to his throne;—and the man of destiny had answered, addressing the head of the Bourbons simply as "Monsieur," when he told him that to return to his inheritance he would have to

march over the corpses of five hundred thousand Frenchmen. "I am not insensible to the misfortunes of your family," he wrote, and he offered to contribute to their support. Even then he felt the sceptre in his grasp, and filled with inordinate ambition, he had no intention of letting it go. At the same time, the knowledge of Louis' existence discomforted him, and this was undoubtedly one of the reasons that urged him to push his authority to the utmost when he had permitted d'Enghien's arrest and execution. The effect of the horror inspired by this act of injustice was already beginning to wear off, however, and the minds of the fickle people were turning to other things; and they had, in truth, much to occupy them besides the fate of the rest of the conspirators yet awaiting trial.

Antatole d'Harcourt had watched the course of events closely, and he was in no way dazzled by the growing popularity of the new chief. As Victor had become more and more independent of his care, his friend had resumed his own old train of thought, and the projects that had for a time remained dormant returned again to his mind. He even met with de Boissy and de Montfort once

more for the purpose of considering future plans, but he discouraged hasty action, and became privately more than ever determined to assume the whole responsibility himself. He was therefore content to lie in wait, like some crafty beast of prey, until the blow could be struck surely. Moreover, he had learned to know a new side of life during the past weeks, and he felt a great reluctance to at once sever the associations that had been established with Victor's friends. His very inability to produce any visible effect upon Madeleine spurred him on to greater efforts, for he hated to be baffled. Her indifference vexed him, though he would not admit that he cared for her regard. To any one else he would have expressed his admiration openly, but he quailed before the glance of her clear hazel eyes and did not attempt any familiarity, though he determined that in some way he would break down the barriers of her reserve. It was the desire to see her again that had really prompted him to accompany Victor on that first visit made in order to express grateful recognition of her care.

As they walked along the broad thoroughfare, known to the whole world to-day by its name of

de Rivoli, given in honor of the conqueror of Italy, Bonaparte passed with his escort. The crowd cheered, but Anatole looked up contemptuously. "*Canaille*," he muttered between his closed teeth, and he brought his rather oblique eyebrows together when he saw that Victor gazed after him eagerly and saluted.

When they entered the Bertrand home, d'Olonet stepped on in advance and led the way up the red-carpeted stair as one who had a right to show the road; and his friend followed with feelings of satisfaction at the idea of visiting Madeleine under her own roof and of curiosity to see how she lived there.

In the ante-chamber they found her two young brothers, Gaspard and Réné, who were engaged in fencing with blunted foils. They escaped down a long passage at the approach of strangers, and paused in the distance to hazard conjectures as to who the newcomers might be. They had never before seen either the pale, almost boyish-looking officer, or his dark-browed, imposing-looking companion, who was dressed with a certain elegance that seemed striking to their eyes. Anatole still wore his hair in a cue tied with a black

ribbon; and though he might be starving, he always contrived when in Paris to appear well, even modishly, attired;—and thanks to the attention bestowed upon his much-worn clothes by the ex-valet and his tidy daughter, many deficiencies were glossed over.

Entering Madeleine's pleasant *salon* the young men were greeted with the sweet graciousness that always made her so charming; and they were then invited to take a cup of chocolate in the conservatory, where the glass had been thrown back to admit the soft spring air. Anatole laid a hand on his heart and bowed low as he held open the door to let her pass.

"I am your most obedient servant, mademoiselle," he said.

Isidore entered a moment later, and all four gathered about a round iron, marble-topped table. The breeze blew in gently, ruffling Madeleine's shining locks, and lifting the edge of her lace-bordered *fichu* that she wore over her dress of tender gray. Her eyes were beaming, and she did not disguise her pleasure at the young men's visit as she dispensed her hospitality with charming grace. Victor felt that it was very good to be there.

Anatole watched her as he rested his chin on the top of his gold-headed cane, and he surreptitiously smoothed out his own fine ruffles—while Bertrand in his precise suit of black and Victor in his military redingote were a foil to the greater elegance of the other two. The plants made a background of living green, and the delicate Sèvres cups on the table beside the beautiful silver pitcher that held the steaming chocolate, completed the picture of refined luxury.

Conversation being general, it naturally turned quickly to the event of the day before, when that all-important motion had been made in the Tribunate, demanding that the government of the Republic should be confided to an Emperor, and that the Empire should be made hereditary in the family of Napoleon Bonaparte.

All Paris was ringing with the news, and when Isidore explained that the title of Emperor in reality only meant "Victorious Consul," he was but voicing the popular demand that the people's idol should not only be crowned, but receive a plausible title. Isidore also alluded to the number of the old nobles who were gradually returning to France, attracted by the magnet of metropolitan

life, now that order had been restored to Paris; and he hinted that they would not be slow to avail themselves of any indulgence offered by Bonaparte. The lawyer confidently prophesied that in the very near future the capital was destined to possess a real court again.

He became animated as he talked, and he was so carried away by his subject that he did not notice how Anatole's expression changed.

"I was at the opera the other night," he went on to say, "and when the First Consul and his wife entered their box, every one in the house arose and remained standing until the illustrious couple sat down. It was but the honor due to their station, and this matter of increasing ceremony means much. It is surely coming, this dynasty chosen by and founded by the people, and France shall flourish under its protection, and the rest of the world must tremble."

"In that case," said d'Harcourt, with a covert sneer, "we certainly must endure to see the semblance of a court, though I fear that the elements that will compose it may be somewhat heterogeneous." He turned toward Madeleine. "Mademoiselle, you will doubtless wish to appear there,

and the assembly will be much graced by your charms."

His words were polite, and he inclined courteously toward her, but the superciliousness of his manner had not been veiled, and Madeleine's eyes flashed with a dangerous light. Victor, seeing this, half arose, and his hand sought for his sword. Both felt at the same moment an implied disrespect.

"They tell me," continued Anatole imperturbably as he delicately shook the snuff from his fingers and closed the enamelled box—a relic of better days—with a snap, "that the First Consul is a great admirer of beauty. Therefore, mademoiselle, you will certainly find a welcome there; and a fine *parti* may thus be easily won in these days of rapid fortunes. I think, however, that we are all agreed that the long-inherited title of Count is more to be coveted than that of a newly created Prince."

The insinuation was too plain to be mistaken, and d'Harcourt learned that he had gone a step too far.

"Monsieur!" cried Victor, while his eyes blazed.

But Madeleine had risen and was standing, with

one hand resting on the table. Now she drew herself up to her full height as she answered loftily: "Monsieur has strangely forgotten himself. I do not doubt that in the future there will be an increase of intriguers of both noble and plebeian birth, for I have learned that they flourish in the atmosphere of courts; but so long as the tricolor waves over the one to come and above the homes of our people, I think that we may remain confident that the true women of France will know how to maintain their dignity. Your arm, monsieur," she said, turning to Victor, and placing her hand upon it, she grandly swept out of the room.

For one moment Anatole stood as if dazed; but though he had met his match, he quickly recovered himself and, touched with a feeling of real shame, he hastened after her. Bending his knee, he stooped to kiss her hand with pretty, old-world courtesy, and he said humbly enough: "Forgive me, Mademoiselle Bertrand. I apologize for my presumption. Women of your stamp are unusual, and I shall be the truer gentleman for having met you."

"It is already forgotten, monsieur," replied

Madeleine, and she looked up with one of those rare, sweet smiles that are as precious as a tardy gleam of sunlight on a dull day; and even Victor was satisfied.

The rest of that day Anatole wandered aimlessly about the city. D'Olonet's face of perfect contentment haunted him; and as he remembered how the lad had looked when he had left him standing beside the noble woman that he claimed for his friend, it seemed to the older man that Victor had grown taller. He had stood there as her protector, with his face all aglow at the thought of the significance of his position; and he had held himself amazingly erect, while his eyes had filled with the light born of the strength of a new manhood.

"Victor is safe," thought Anatole d'Harcourt. "When the time comes, I can leave him in better hands than mine; and as for his rank, in these chaotic times he must take care of that for himself. *Noblesse oblige*, 'tis true, but, *foi de gentilhomme!* a woman like mademoiselle is one of Nature's queens, after all."

He was in a strangely unsettled mood himself, and did not return to the Rue des Trois Canettes

until long after he had supped parsimoniously and in solitude within the uninviting interior of a cook-shop or *gargote* in the Rue du Temple. His finances would admit of nothing better that evening, and he was so utterly wearied both in mind and body that he actually dozed over the soiled copy of the gazette that he had found upon the greasy table. He might have had an omelet for nothing at the *Sapin Vert*, but he was already so deeply in debt to Armand Gourtain that he was willing to content himself with what a sorry fortune provided elsewhere.

When he at last crossed the square in front of the great cathedral on his way to the inn, the *façade* of the mighty church looked unreal in the ghostly light as it towered above him, and familiar as he was with it, its immensity that night seemed to crush him. There it stood upon its own solid basis, its beauty wedded to the weird world of uncouth gargoyles and finials, *les chimères de Notre Dame*, that recalled a note from the roar of the tumultuous, misty past. The uncanny folk enthroned in petrified state have kept guard over the siren-like city below as the centuries have run their course, and among them there is one

strange human face peering into futurity. What have the years brought to that yearning, importunate gaze? What is yet to come?

Those eyes have looked upon the turmoil of the Middle Ages, the terrible license of later years; upon pomp and glory, poverty and sin. Kings have passed in and out beneath the sculptured portals, beggars have waited there for alms, criminals have sought the refuge of the sanctuary. Before the parvis have clamored riotous mobs. Beneath the ægis of the church, men, women, and children have been christened, wedded, buried. And the ever-changing years of the city's life still roll on, of which the great metropolitan temple is both the epitome and the sign.

Above the seething world swing the bells. They have pealed on high while *Te Deums* have been sung below. The great *Bourdon* called Jacqueline, that first rang for the Angelus in 1472, has been articulate with France's history ever since. The whole gamut from horror to delight has been rung in the diapason of the aerial music. The fearful exultation of the tocsin's call, the blissful notes of returning peace, the mournful

tolling for the illustrious dead, uttered through the clanging of iron tongues, have reached the waiting ears of the citizens.

The bells of victory have also been incessant, and already in 1804 the chiming for the Napoleonic series was well under way, and the sound was to go on swelling until it announced the last of the triumphs that virtually laid the world at the conqueror's feet.

Some such rush of thought surged vaguely through Anatole's mind as he stood alone before the great edifice, thinking of the past and apprehensively trying to pierce the future. Then he whispered so low that only the night wind caught the words and hurried them on: "And yet this hand of mine can stop the blatant ringing. If opportunity will only favor me, the world has already heard the last crash of bells for Bonaparte. My time is surely near, but before it comes, I must see a priest and confess once more."

A cold chill crept over him and lay like the grasp of icy fingers about his heart. He was filled with a sudden fear that threatened to unman him; but this was not a dread of possible defeat or death; it was alarm at the dawning of a new love

in his life that he should be forced to fight down with relentless energy.

The city roared and muttered that night and at last sank to a short-lived rest, but Anatole heard nothing. He, too, had fallen asleep, and through his uneasy slumber a vision came to him. He saw again the wealth of her burnished chestnut locks, her drooping eyelids over calm, true, hazel eyes—he gloried in the splendid curves of her figure, the turn of her neck, in her fine, white, supple hands. The vision that he saw was of something that was more than human; it was of a goddess almost, or of some strong, pure heroine of an epic poem. But he knew that her face could fill with an earthly tenderness and compassion, for he had seen a transcendent womanliness there when she had won his dearest friend back to life—but from himself, she turned away her eyes.

In his distress he half awoke and tried to push the apparition from him; and at last, fully aroused, he lay silently, listening to the beating of his own heart that hammered and throbbed in his breast as it had never done before in the face of bodily danger; until at last, relief came and

he sank into the complete repose of a dreamless sleep.

He did not know that Gabrielle had watched for him when he had come in, had followed him up the long stairs, and had waited in the dim corridor without his room. He had not heard her sobs, and was unconscious that she lay on the cold tiles listening to his long, slow breathing after he had fallen asleep. Nor had he any idea that, attracted by a gleam of light that had found its way through a crack of the ill-fitting door, she had placed her eye to the key-hole and had watched him as he lay on his knees before the crucifix while he prayed. The premonition that the opportunity that he longed for was near at hand, had been strong upon him; and turning with determination from all softening influences, he had told his beads with the desperate earnestness of the fanatic refusing to receive aught but a blessing from heaven upon his undertaking.

And yet the merciful Father was still watching above the stars; and the Madonna and Child dyed upon the stained glass of the great church, looked upward with supplicating gaze that seemed to say: "Great God, forgive him; he knows not what he is about to do."

CHAPTER IX.

THE long May days lengthened out in sunshine, and Victor assiduously visited his charming friend; and during this constant intercourse they were drawn more closely to each other, and their acquaintance quickly ripened into something deeper. Madeleine listened for his eager tread in the antechamber, and was rewarded by hearing it nearly every day, and when he came in to her as she sat in the drawing-room, with his still pale face momentarily flushed with exercise and with pleasurable expectations, and with his brown hair pushed back carelessly from off his forehead, he looked so bright and winning that her heart went out to him freely, and she settled herself comfortably to listen to whatever he had come to tell her. It had resolved itself into this, and Madeleine with her calm, clear mind, had become his helper and mentor, and he appealed to her for sympathy and advice in everything.

They had much to talk about, and he hid noth-

ing from her as they discussed his failures in the past and his hopes for the future. He always found her full of help, and her strong nature acted like a tonic upon his more volatile one. He told her everything, even to the plan his mother in far-off Dresden had formed with an old friend of his father's who had settled there, which was to result in a match between his young daughter and Victor himself. He laughed disdainfully as he spoke of it, in spite of his knowledge of the excellent marriage portion that his proposed bride could bring; and he told Madeleine that he had never seen the young lady, who was still pursuing her studies in a convent.

"Besides," he said, "my honor is not in the least involved, for I have pledged myself to nothing." His voice sank, and he added in earnest tones: "Since I have come to Paris I have learned that I can only be happy by the side of a truly noble woman—like yourself, mademoiselle." And then he had looked up with such a world of devotion in his eyes, that Madeleine could only drop her own while a faint color stole into her cheeks.

She knew that she should not listen to him, though it was sweet to do so. His duty to his

mother, his half-engagement to another, as well as their own different antecedents, all pointed to a future for him that lay far from the path in life that was open to the lawyer's sister; and her sense of uprightness forbade any desire to lure him away from his natural course. She felt so much older, too! She therefore told herself that she loved him as a brother only, and at the time she really believed it, but the thought came with infinite tenderness.

This matter of two years' seniority was at once a convenient and a dangerous thing, for it allowed much, and permitted an intimacy to be established on what was really most unstable ground; and Madeleine accepted the situation, taking it for granted that his disparity in years made actual wooing impossible. She was not much troubled by the small conventionalities of society, never dreaming of the necessity of the chaperon to which all French girls are accustomed—so he and she were thrown together constantly and alone; and in this fostering atmosphere of repose and happiness their love grew apace like a fair flower.

She had been mistress of the house since early childhood, and had carried on her willing

shoulders far more than the light burdens that usually come to young years, so the position that she had assumed toward him seemed perfectly natural, and the sister-mother who had always cared for her brothers and sister without thought of self, quietly adopted this new-comer who had appeared in her home. Lili had led a far more joyous existence. Sheltered and watched over by her older sister, she had been spared every pain and responsibility that the other could shield her from. Her nature was different from Madeleine's, for she was extremely vivacious, and gay as a bird; and pretty, with the freshness of youth, she was a very flower for gallants to circulate about. Being immensely proud of her, Madeleine had sunk her own maidenhood in the younger girl's, and had watched over her as though she were her own child. She was so much graver herself, that she fancied, sometimes, that Lili had absorbed into her sprightly life, not only her own share of youth, but also what had belonged to her elder sister—but it never occurred to the latter to regret any joy she might have had herself, and only rejoiced that she had been able to supply so full a portion to the little girl growing up beside her.

Madeleine and Victor often talked of the future. They were apt to sit by the open window quite close together. As I have said, they were usually alone, for Bertrand was busy over his affairs and away from home during the greater part of the day. The boys were at school, and Lili had not yet returned from Lyons. The two whose lives were flowing on so peacefully were quite content to have it so. Victor picked up her work when she dropped it, or played with her skeins of silk as he sat beside her, and was foolishly happy the while. Sometimes, at her solicitation, he read aloud; and often they hung together over the spinet as she sang old tunes or picked out new ones. It was the old, old story, that is yet ever new in its varied setting.

But one small, dark spot clouded their clear skies, and this was Madeleine's shrinking from Anatole. She could not overcome her aversion to him, or yet shake off that charm-like spell that he threw about her. She felt the force of his character and she dreaded its influence, but she could hardly tell what it was that she feared. Whenever she saw him she felt a foreboding of evil, and yet was drawn to listen to what he said, with a

sense of what seemed to be almost admiration, but which was in reality but a tacit acknowledgment of his power. There was something mesmeric in this subtle force of his that it was impossible to either understand or to avoid. He came quite often in the evening and sat almost silently in the lamp-light, his dark brow contracted, and his aristocratic hands playing with his fob. The grasp of those long white fingers with their polished, carefully tended nails, always suggested something cruel—not coarse brutality, but the refined type that might learn to strangle a victim with a silken cord. He was often moody, but burst out now and again in brilliant flashes of wit or of biting invective. She wished that he would not come, and yet when he did not, she always missed him.

On his part, he could not keep away. His visits to her had become his one chosen recreation and rest. At other times his mind was intent upon "stalking his game," as he expressed his action in his own words. He haunted the opera the nights that Bonaparte was there, he went constantly to the theatre when Mlles. Georges and Duchenois played, for he knew of the great man's

admiration for them; and he mixed with the crowd and tried to get near him whenever the chance occurred. He even lay in wait at the doors of churches and of public offices, but the ruler was well guarded, and no chance to approach him offered. After a period of fruitless waiting, Anatole called at the despised lawyer's, and while Madeleine and Victor drew closely together in happy companionship, he sat apart.

"He looks like one of the fallen angels," she exclaimed one day to Victor. "He is almost beautiful with his regular features, and with the unusual pallor that makes him look like a statue, but there is something in his face that makes me shudder. When he sits silently fixing those black eyes on one, it makes one believe that he is capable of throwing some power of enchantment. If I had any faith in the evil eye, I should say that he possessed it. Surely, Victor, he must be one of those natures who have the capacity of great good or of great wickedness. If they do not soar they are apt to grovel. How is it that you and he are such friends? You are so open hearted and sunny tempered; he is so cold, and reserved, and cynical. There is a mystery about him that I

cannot fathom; and I cannot shake off the feeling that his companionship will bring you harm."

Victor looked up in surprise. "Why, he is one of the cleverest fellows that I know, and a most devoted friend. There is a great power about him, too, that one cannot resist. I know that he is not a saint, and that he has positive vices; but, after all, he is cool and brave, and true to his beliefs, whatever they may be, and that should count for something. He has saved my life more than once, and—well, one can't always explain such things, but we loved each other as boys, and we do still."

He lifted a vase of lilacs from the table, and, putting them to his face, he inhaled the delicate odor. He always kept the room full of flowers, for he said that they belonged wherever Madeleine was. As he replaced the jar, there was a slightly defiant note in his voice. "Do not abuse Anatole d'Harcourt. That is one thing that I cannot bear even from you."

"How did he save your life?" she asked.

"That was long ago—the first time I mean—and he did it as only a hero could have done. We were both boys, and we had been playing in a straw-covered pavilion in the park of the old estate

in Brittany. I fell asleep there, and in some way the place caught on fire while I was thus unconscious. It is a long story, but to tell it shortly, I was missed, and then Anatole saved me. He rushed in through fire and smoke and dragged me out, but he was terribly burned himself, and for weeks it was thought he could not live. That was once. Another time while we were swimming in our own lake, I was taken with sudden cramps, and he dived after me as I sank, and brought me safely to land. That was the second time. And then, mademoiselle, when I was ill some weeks ago, and you came and helped me to get well, he left me in your hands, and let you save me from the life we had been leading together. That was the third time."

He looked up with a quick glance of fervid feeling.

She smiled. "You saved yourself. But tell me some more."

"Antoinette always said—Antoinette is my sister, you know—Antoinette always said that Anatole was the strongest, and bravest, and handsomest lad she knew. Poor little Antoinette! I think she loved him, but we were only children

then. When my father died and I became her protector, I promised her to Anatole; but now she and my mother are far away, and there was no money, and he did not press me, and I gradually forgot. I suppose they have too, and that some day she will be wedded to a sourkraut-eating German." His voice grew husky. "I wish that you might see her. She is very lovely, Mademoiselle Bertrand. She ought to know you and your sister Lili."

"Hardly," answered Madeleine, and she looked up with her sad, protesting smile. "Your mother would not care for that. We are only of the *bourgeoisie*, you know."

Then he became indignant until she soothed him.

With returning strength he grew animate and full of plans. Life was filled to overflowing with possibilities. There was nothing that he would not dare or do; and Madeleine gloried with him at the thought of the future, and neither dreamed of failure.

"Only be true to yourself, Victor," she said. She had gradually dropped into the habit of calling him so, on the score of his greatly inferior age. Alack, those two paltry years!

"When you follow out your own best instincts, you usually do what is right; but remember that the camp has many pitfalls, and that you have had tumbles enough already. Be the man that you know you can be."

"Will you show me how?" he asked.

As Victor grew stronger he improved in looks as well as in spirits. Early hours and a regular life brought the color into his face again. His flesh grew firm, his eyes bright. The substantial meals and the old wine served at Isidore Bertrand's table, where he dined constantly, did their part of the work. But what really put the most new vigor into his veins was his emancipation from his previous ways. The healthy atmosphere in which he now passed most of his time reinvigorated him, and his mental attitude was helped while he improved in physical condition.

With this new joy of existence came an increasing energy. He became positively intoxicated with life, and he felt equal to any demands made upon him. Everything pleased him that spring. The streets had never seemed so amusing, the flower-markets so gay. The cafés and the restaurants appeared to be unusually full of life, and

were in consequence most entertaining. He longed for music, and he coaxed Bertrand and his sister to the opera; and he felt a personal pride in the woman who leaned on his arm, when he noticed that the people turned to look after the gleam of her wonderful hair; and he imagined that they asked each other who she was. He took a deep interest in her appearance and was fastidious as to what she wore, even permitting himself to make suggestions; and Madeleine humored him in his fancy, and caught herself in private studying what became her most.

The troublesome lawsuit was won at last, thanks to Bertrand's skill, and Victor found himself in possession of moderate means. Then books and other trifles found their way to his lady constantly. Though they were only small affairs, each was chosen with a thoughtful care that she recognized; and, though she scolded him for his extravagance, she was glad.

And so the days flowed on, and each of the two looked deep into the other's eyes; and Madeleine laid a moral hand on his shoulder, and, adopting the manner of an elder sister, she led him to think high thoughts and to lead a rational life as

he slowly began to extricate himself from his various difficulties. She was always ready with sympathy and counsel; and she came to his aid just as she helped Gaspard and Réné out of their school scrapes.

And then one day Lili came home, and with her there blew in a whole atmosphere of youth and early summer and of hope. She was extremely blithe and pleasure-loving, and, we dare to think, a little selfish, though perhaps this was partly Madeleine's fault for having done so much for her. At any rate, the elder sister was inordinately proud of the younger one, who was a promising student of that lovely artist Mme. Vigée-Le Brun, whom she worshipped. She went each day to paint beside her, and being one of the petted children of fortune, she was not only coaxed and praised, but was often invited also to the entertainments of the admired artist, who gathered in her *salon* much of the *bon ton* of Paris.

But Victor was not to be turned from his allegiance to her sister, and Lili perceiving this tossed her pretty head.

"What do you see in that little officer, Madeleine?" she asked. "He is like a boy with his pink

cheeks and his big hearty laugh. Now, for my part, I prefer his friend, Monsieur le Marquis d'Harcourt."

She rolled the title luxuriously over her tongue, for Lili did not hold to the republican ideas in which she had been bred, and she was much impressed with the distinction given by a high-sounding name. "The Marquis is a splendid-looking man," she continued. "He is dark and so distinguished in his bearing that any one would notice him—and I adore black eyes. He has such beautiful manners, too. He is the one for me. You let young d'Olonet follow you about like a pet dog, and you have hardly a word for the other, though he never takes his eyes off you. You can have either by lifting your little finger, but you do not seem to care."

"Hush, child; do not talk foolishness. I care nothing for titles, though M. d'Olonet has a very good one of his own, quite as old and even more honorable than that of his friend. But such distinctions as theirs belong to the past now. He has been very ill, and it was only kind to be patient with him and to help him get well. His

mother and sister are far away, and I have but endeavored to fill their place a little."

"You need not fire up about the title, Madeleine. Such things are coming back with the new court. Henri Joujol, the hair-dresser, told me the other night, when he came to curl my hair for the *soirée* at Mme. Le Brun's, that of all the gentlemen he knew, M. d'Harcourt had the finest style. He said that he positively longed to wait on him himself, but he understood that he employed his own valet."

"That must be Amand Gourtain, who keeps a tavern in the Rue des Trois Canettes. Victor has told me about him. He was in the service of the old Marquis, and M. d'Harcourt has a room in his house now. There are but few members of the out-at-elbow aristocracy who can afford to keep a body-servant."

"No matter," answered the little sister hotly. "One is a boy; the other is a man of the world. I care nothing for your young adorer, but I will paint his portrait for you, Madeleine, all the same. Shall I? We will pose him on his knees before you, holding your fan and looking up at you—so."

She broke out in a merry laugh as she struck

an attitude that would have amused her sister if it had not pained her instead. The truth was that the girl's thoughtless words had touched her too nearly, and she felt the hot blood mounting to her face; but she held her peace and said nothing.

Lili was by no means shy. She was even a little pert, but she was really a good child and loved her sister devotedly, though she did tease her at times. After all they were not as much together as might have been supposed. Three mornings in the week Thérèse escorted the girl to Mme. Le Brun's studio, and she did not fetch her back until night, and on the days that she remained at home she was much occupied with her work—so after her return from Lyons there were almost as many hours as before when her sister and Victor sat together alone and undisturbed.

Sometimes they had the tea-tray carried out into the conservatory, and, sitting beside the pretty table, the intimacy grew as they helped each other over the slight repast. It was usually of him that they talked, though she might have told him much about herself; but somehow, her portion in life had been defined long ago for she had always been the one to listen, and, in her generous sym-

pathy for others, she had learned years before to forget herself.

Thus the first half of the month glided away so swiftly that they hardly realized the flight of time. The 18th of May brought great news. Bertrand came in excitedly to tell them that Cambacérès accompanied by the senators and escorted by a large body of troops, had gone to St. Cloud, where he had made a speech, and for the first time addressed Bonaparte as "Your Majesty." Mme. Bonaparte had also been visited in her apartment and proclaimed Empress.

The great stroke was thus accomplished, and the people, dazzled by the glitter of pomp and glory and carried away by the wonderful personal magnetism of the man, shouted with joy. What Anatole had predicted really did take place; and as the new court sprang into life, it was largely peopled by aspiring commoners that Napoleon delighted to honor; and they and the members of the old aristocracy stood side by side. M. de Talleyrand, who was promptly appointed Grand Chamberlain, was consulted about everything. A fever of etiquette seized on all the inhabitants of the imperial household, and the ponderous

regulations of Louis XIV. were consulted. Mme. Bonaparte even sent for Mme. Campan, who had been in close attendance upon the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, in order that she might impart her experience. Josephine's head was possibly a little turned when she counted among her suite many of high degree, and the victory she had won by attaching Mme. de la Rochefoucauld to her person as Lady of Honor was little short of intoxicating. Mme. de la Fayette was Lady of the Bedchamber.

The Montmorencys, the Montesquious, and others returned, tempted by the promise that from the day they cast in their lot with Bonaparte, they should resume their former importance, and thus a regular court was gradually formed. Napoleon's seat was for the time firm upon the throne that had been but lately vacated by the nation's anointed king; and after the coronation finally set its seal upon the mightiest potentate in Europe, he uttered the ominous words: "I found the crown of France upon the ground, and I took it up on the point of my sword."

We have looked on, however, somewhat in advance. When Bertrand rushed in on that 18th

day of May, 1804, with the news that he had heard, he was flushed with the same exultation and excitement that was to run like an electric current through the country. His idol had been proclaimed; and when he shouted for the first time in his immense satisfaction, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" both Madeleine and Victor rose to their feet and echoed the words.

That night Napoleon gave a dinner to the officers of his household, and it was asserted afterward that he never once through force of habit addressed any of the company as "Citizen"; but returned for the first time to the old word "Monsieur," which indeed had long been restored to society, but which he had never used. The former term was thus definitely relegated to the past.

CHAPTER X.

THAT evening when Anatole approached the *Sapin Vert*, its lights shone hospitably through the small leaded panes, and after he had passed beneath the battered old sign, he entered the wine-shop and paused to lean with his elbow upon the zinc-covered counter in the tap-room, while he entered into conversation with his host.

Amand Gourtain always kept up the fiction that Anatole's presence in the hostelry was not only an honor, but of advantage to the business as well, for it gave it a certain distinction. It was his way of showing his respect for a member of the distinguished family fallen into adversity; and he treated the son of his old master with the utmost respect and consideration. He now pressed him to accept a glass of wine that he handed across the stationary shelf behind which he stood himself, and which was loaded with a miscellaneous collection of bottles and drinking glasses.

The new comer shook his head. "No, Amand, not to-night, but I thank you all the same. How

has the world gone with you to-day; and have you heard of what they are talking in the city? What are we coming to, old friend?"

The corner of his lip drew down in an expression of utter contempt, which the other was quick to notice but careful not to comment on. He contented himself with running his fingers through his short and coarse black hair that stood up on his head like the uncompromising bristles of a scrubbing brush. His small eyes twinkled mischievously as he answered:

"Monsieur has heard the great news then! Business, too, has been good to-day. It goes. All is well. But there is also much for patriots to think of just now. When the citizens come in here and wish to drink to the new state of things, one must certainly *tringuer* with them. It comes about, therefore, that though I have taken in money with one hand, I have poured it out with the other."

"The people have gone mad, Amand," said d'Harcourt, as he shifted his weight from his right leg to the left, and he leaned further over the board that separated him from the inn-keeper. He opened his snuff-box and took a pinch before

he offered its contents with an air of condescension to his companion.

Gourtain took what was presented and then shook the remaining dust lightly from his fingers. He endeavored to compose his jovial red face into lines of concern, and he busied himself with the implements of his calling.

"The people have gone mad," repeated his guest sarcastically. "They have upset one dynasty, but only to found another. We shall see what we shall see!"

"And yet, monsieur," said Amand deferentially, as he wiped out the glass he held, "the First Consul refused the honor several times. He is Emperor now because the position has been forced upon him. *Enfin!* We shall see, as monsieur says. I hear that we shall have a real court again. Paris will be gay!"

The other did not answer, but he looked fixedly at his father's old servant, who, rendered uneasy under the searching glance, balanced himself squarely upon sturdy legs set rather far apart, and encased in gray, coarsely ribbed stockings. He was in reality jubilant, but it was not on his programme to appear rude.

"Monsieur will see for himself what this new court will be like," he answered in a conciliatory tone, as he held the glass up to the light to see if a speck of dust remained. "They tell me that many of the old nobles will return to be there; and if the real aristocrats show the way, Paris may once more see that fine manners and good society become her better than misrule and disorder."

"I care not to associate with such mongrel nobles as the new creations will be," said the gentleman scornfully. "Besides, Amand, I have no clothes. Do I look like a courtier?"

He laughed unpleasantly, and the ex-valet looked up with real concern on his face.

"I have done what I could with monsieur's wardrobe. Monsieur should wed," he added bluntly. "If the lady brings a fortune it will be well; and the name of d'Harcourt would be a fair exchange for much money."

Anatole made a deprecating gesture. "I could not bring myself to attend such a court, Amand—and I shall not buy my way to anything either."

"But," continued the other, "'tis often done. Among the *bourgeoisie*, perhaps," he added tenta-

tively, "there are truly lovely ladies whose fathers have well-lined pockets. With such a one a fine *dot* would be forthcoming."

D'Harcourt's face grew hard as he answered: "You do not know what you are saying. I will not debase myself." He pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Ladies should be wooed," he said, "with flowers and sweets, as well as with soft glances and with many a *billet doux*. Ladies love gifts, but I have nothing to offer. But stay," he added, "I have one beautiful thing in my possession that one might be proud to wear. It is a web of old Italian lace, fine as gossamer, and rich enough for a queen's toilette. I won it the other night from M. de Montfort. It was an heirloom in his family, but he had no money left when we dealt the cards for the last time, so he put that up. Poor fellow, I was sorry for him, but what will you? It was his luck. When he handed it over there were tears in his eyes, for it had been his mother's."

"Is monsieur acquainted with no one that it will become?"

"Yes, Amand." He spoke fiercely as he leaned over the counter, and his face took on an expression that it was not good to see.

"There is a lovely lady who lives beyond the Seine. She should be dressed only like a queen. Laces, satins, velvets, are what she should always wear. The whiteness of her skin rivals alabaster. Her hair is like red gold. She is not human—she is divine. She is a goddess, Amand, for us poor mortals to worship. The lace would become her."

The inn-keeper stared, and in his embarrassment, he nervously picked up the corner of his apron and tucked the end within the confining string at his waist.

"Monsieur jests."

"Jests? Oh, no, I am in earnest." D'Harcourt laughed, but there was nothing mirthful in the sound. He put out his hand and took the glass of wine that the other still held. "I am weary," he remarked, "and I will drink after all. Good luck to you, Amand. Touch!"

He stood upright and reached out toward his host. His air of condescension was infinite, but the old retainer did not take offence at that, and hastened to fill his own glass; but before he raised it to his lips, he placed its rim against the one in Anatole's hand.

"To the lady's health," he ventured to say significantly.

But d'Harcourt looked at him coldly, and pushed the wine away so that it splashed like drops of ruby blood upon the zinc. He dashed his own glass to the ground where it shivered in pieces, and the liquid spilled and mingled with the sawdust on the floor.

"Her health may not be drunk in a *cabaret*," he said with an iciness of tone that chilled the very marrow in Amand Gourtain's bones. "It would be a presumption."

He turned on his heel and walked to the open door, and he lifted his hat in order that the evening air might cool his heated forehead. Even there, in the narrow street, he smelled a suggestion of summer, a fragrance of fresh earth that was exhaled from beyond the confining walls of masonry that enclosed within many a courtyard small oases of delight, and that stood guard over gardens of forgotten sweetness in the rear of unpromising-looking houses. An odor of new verdure came to him from beyond the barriers, and also the smell of bulbous plants. A green vine hung over a neighboring wall, and a crown

of early foliage adorned the branches of the tree that rose above it. The scent of blossoms reached him from the stand by an open window. The indescribable softness of the winning, wooing summer, coming to heal winter's wounds, lay on the atmosphere that borrowed its fragrance from the hidden gardens. Anatole's face worked painfully, but no one saw it; and when he re-entered the room, his features were as set and cold as though cast in steel.

Gourtain looked at him dubiously, and in his perplexity scratched his own ear. He had evidently offended the young man, and he wished to conciliate him. He therefore grasped at what seemed to his material mind as the best solution of the difficulty, and in the hope of turning Anatole's attention to something else, he asked respectfully with what he wished to be served for supper. D'Harcourt's moods disturbed him, but his face cleared and he looked relieved when the former gave his order. A moment later, the *casseroles* rattled in the kitchen, and through the open door one could see the glow of the fire. And Anatole sat at the bare deal table in the outer room, and supporting his chin in his hand, he waited.

Quite unknown to the two men, Gabrielle had lost no word of the conversation, and at the first mention of the beautiful lace she had held her breath. Her constant service on her father's customers had taught her to be precocious, and by keeping both eyes and ears open she had learned some things that less sophisticated maidens never dream of. This intercourse with men had made her forward, and she had followed Anatole about whenever he came to her home, and she had been unwilling for any one to serve him but herself. In the free-and-easy atmosphere of the tavern he had allowed himself to take liberties with her that would have been impossible with a woman of his own class, and though he had treated her at first as a child, he had soon begun to jest with her for his own diversion, and did not give a thought to what might be the ultimate result of his action. That a gentleman should have a word for a pretty barmaid was nothing unusual, and Anatole considered that he had done no wrong. She had been busy clearing off the tables while he and her father had talked that night, and though she had listened, she had never paused in her work, until

at the first mention of the lady, her heart had stood still.

"Of course," she argued, "this beautiful friend can be no other than the one he met that day near the Tour St. Jacques." Gabrielle remembered that her wonderful hair had looked like a glory; and that she had had a most noble carriage. It had all become perfectly clear to the little barmaid's mind. She thought of how she had seen them go on their way together, and she knew that she could readily find the house again that she had seen them enter. As she wiped off the table, her throat was choking and unshed tears burned hotly in her eyes, but neither Anatole nor her father took the least notice of her, and as she continued her work she strained her ears to catch each word they were saying. When she saw the shattered glass lying on the floor her worst fears were confirmed, and she hastened out of the room quite as much to hide her face as in answer to her mother's call from the kitchen. Gourtain was an admirable cook himself, but on this occasion he remained to entertain his high-born customer.

It was strange that Gabrielle had never seen Victor, and that she also knew nothing of his ill-

ness. If she had been aware of d'Harcourt's anxiety for his friend she might not have been so carried away by the tide of her own imagination. D'Olonet had been so much occupied elsewhere that he had rarely come to the inn, and when he had done so at long intervals, he had made no impression upon her. She continued, therefore, to harbor her conclusion that Anatole's preoccupation resulted from his attentions to a certain lady to whom he paid incessant court; and following out this train of thought, she had become convinced that she had discovered the object of his admiration when she had seen Madeleine. As she had seen them enter Victor's lodging together, she had been equally certain that the house was the lady's home. She had thus nursed this idea until it had grown into a conviction, and Anatole's devotion to his friend during his illness had, of course, tended to strengthen this impression. So she continued to torment herself about something that was entirely evolved out of the unrestrained fancies of her own undisciplined thoughts. Poor Gabrielle was by no means the first woman who has thus shed the tears of bitterness for something unreal. It had not occurred to

her to more conclusively prove the truth of her conjectures. She had jumped to a conclusion and obstinately refused to entertain any other idea. When the glass fell to the floor shattered, she had started and she had held on to the table for support. As she stood there panting, her breath rose and fell with her quick respiration, and she was angry with the unreasoning temper of a limited intelligence.

"Monsieur has spilled the wine," said Amand calmly. "It is a pity, for it came of good vintage. As for the lady, I apologize. The health of such a one should not be drunk in a *cabaret.* Monsieur is right."

He stooped below the counter and drew a glass again from another and a smaller cask than the last. He also filled a horn drinking-cup for himself. With a slight bow, and in a conciliatory tone, he continued: "Wine is good, for it warms the heart of man. Will monsieur condescend to drink with me, after all? This time it shall be to his own health and prosperity."

He half closed his lids as he glanced keenly toward his guest with a look full of cunning.

Anatole's eyes had flashed, but the fire died out

as he accepted the proffered glass and said with dignity, and with a touch of real feeling in his voice: "You are a good fellow after all, Amand."

A few seconds later the inn-keeper had proposed to serve him with supper, and, as we have seen, Anatole waited while Gabrielle and her mother were busied in the kitchen. As the former broke the eggs and cut slices from the ring of sour, dark bread, and hunted up the white cheeses that d'Harcourt loved, the two men continued their conversation in tones of studied politeness, but as the talk turned upon politics the gentleman spoke with a thinly veiled sarcasm, and the other in accents that barely concealed his jubilation. They were mentally fencing with each other.

When the young girl returned to the outer room, she hung about, pretending to be busy, but as she bustled around, the remembrance of the old lace remained to haunt her thoughts. "It must be very lovely," she reflected, and she could not deny to her own unwilling consciousness that the thing would be a most fitting adornment for the striking-looking woman that she had seen. "Ah, *mon Dieu!* It must be a delightful thing to be a great lady," she muttered beneath her breath.

"To be able to wear finery like that must be a joy. Why is fate so unjust that it gives to one everything, and from another it even wrests away a hope that is like the wine of life in her veins?" She wrinkled up her pretty forehead, and she tapped impatiently on the floor with her foot. M. d'Harcourt had indeed given her buckles, and buttons, and ribbons, but never anything of more value; and though he had been invariably kind, he had not once looked at her as she had seen him glance at the queenly woman with the chestnut locks. Of course, it was quite clear that a poor girl had no chance beside such a one as that—but Gabrielle was pretty too, and in these days birth did not count for as much as it had done in the past. And she could love, also! Ah, *Dieu!* how her heart was beating now! It was like the throbbing in a poor little hare's breast who had been nearly run to its death. And she could be true too, though this beating was hidden beneath a common dress instead of under the sumptuous clothes worn by rich people. She could die for him if it came to that, she thought, as she stood out of sight in the shadow of the dark room; and at any rate she could wait for him, and slave

for him all her life—and yet he did not care. Here she was, longing for a word or a nod, and he did not see her. When she placed his *omelette* on the table, he never asked if it had been she who had prepared it; and yet one remark of her father's in regard to the other, though well meant, had caused Anatole to fly out in a fury. And then there was the lace too. As her thoughts returned to it she began to wish to see the precious thing, and as the desire grew, she slipped out of the room. Surely it would be no harm to run upstairs and open the upper drawer of his bureau, and just to take one little peep at the treasure if it lay there among his own best things. It could be done so quickly, and no one would ever know. She would not take it out, she would not even touch it. If the lady was to wear the lace, she might at least examine its web. She had never seen any thing of the kind close at hand, and this was clearly an opportunity not to be lost. But M. d'Harcourt would be terribly angry!

For a moment her heart failed her, and she turned to look back through the open door. He was still deep in conversation with her father, and some of their words reached her. They were

talking of the recent plots against the conqueror's life, and Amand was expressing his opinion that they would soon be entirely crushed out; and then both, even though Anatole hated Bonaparte, exclaimed in admiration at the encouragement that Napoleon was constantly giving to the arts and sciences, and to the revival of business prosperity. The Royalist spoke of him as "that man," but he did not rail at him.

She continued to look. D'Harcourt sat at the common table, and her father stood at his side with a napkin over his arm, serving his guest. He had just placed a new flask of wine before him, and Gabrielle felt sure that both would be occupied for some minutes to come. Without giving herself time for longer reflection, she turned and hastened up the stairs as though she were pursued. She knew that she was doing wrong. The very sound of her own feet on the bare steps frightened her, and a lump kept rising in her throat as if it would choke her. After all, Anatole had been very good to her. Suppose he should find her in his room and touching his property! He would rebuke her, and she knew that he might become furious. Did she dare to risk

his anger? She stopped when her hand lay on the latch, but her hesitation only lasted a moment, for a flood of jealousy came and swept away all other feelings—and throwing discretion to the winds, she entered his room.

It was chill up there in that attic chamber. In spite of the warm spring weather outside, there was an atmosphere of dampness and of want of ventilation there, as though the small window had been inadequate to admit enough of the sunshine that had been pouring all day upon the moss-grown roof; and the apartment retained in consequence, a certain stuffiness. No one had remembered to throw back the panes, and there were leaks under the leads that transmitted moisture for a long time. She reproached herself for not having aired the room. Then she struck a light, and when the candle cast its feeble rays, she began to think that she would have done better had she waited for the sunlight of another day, but she had gone too far to retreat now, and in her haste her hand trembled. She placed the light on the table and opened the drawer.

There lay the lace just as she had hoped; a beautiful web of rare worth, somewhat yellow with age,

but valued at many times its own weight in gold. Even to her inexperienced eyes it seemed so lovely a thing as to be beyond all price, and she could only draw a long breath of admiration and clasp her hands in wonder. Then she touched it, and when her fingers had once felt the treasure, there followed the desire to see it unfolded; and her confidence returning as she remained undisturbed, she cautiously lifted the coveted possession from its resting-place and shook it open, and then, so easy are the progressing degrees of wrongdoing when once begun, she threw it scarf-like across her own shoulders, remaining entirely unconscious of the incongruous effect it produced in connection with her own dress of coarse texture and her face, which though pretty, was of a vulgar type. Rendered bolder by action, she lit a second candle, and climbing on a chair she turned herself about in order to get a view of her back and shoulders as they were reflected in the mirror that hung above Anatole's chest of drawers. She drew the soft folds through her hands, she turned to the right and to the left, she even bowed and courtesied to herself in the glass. She smiled, and twisted her head from side to side; and as the

minutes passed, she became completely absorbed in the gratification of her consuming vanity.

"*Dieu de ciel!*" she murmured as she picked up the end of the costly fabric and pressed it against her cheek, "what joy to wear a thing like this! And over a gown of satin the effect would be finer still. It becomes me very well," she added complacently, "but I would like to have a few trinkets also, some shining paste buckles for instance, instead of the silver ones that monsieur gave me, if real diamonds cost too much. The imitation ones shine just as brightly, and I would rather have several clasps set with them than to possess only one pair made of the true stones—and then, let me see. Yes, I would like a jewelled comb, and some scented gloves to match the satin dress, and—and—" but here her imagination failed her.

As she turned herself about, her skirt caught on the sharp corner of the bureau and tore in a jagged rent. She became at once provoked, for she well knew that its reparation would prove to be a long and tedious task, and as she ruefully examined the ragged edges a revulsion of feeling came over her. Fickle as a child crying for every

toy it sees, the joy of handling the lace lost its value in the presence of the present annoyance.

"I can have nothing at all," she cried aloud; "but I must just sit still and sew on this ugly thing, and the taking of little stitches makes my eyes burn and my back ache. Ladies have no such work to do, and they can amuse themselves and wear lovely things; and when their finery needs to be mended, some poor girl like me has to do it. *Ah, que la vie est dure!* Yes, life is also very unjust," she added petulantly.

She snatched the lace from off her shoulders and she grasped it in both her hands. "It is not so beautiful after all," she said pouting; "and if I may not have it, some one else might just as well wear the yellow old thing." She held it out at arm's length and shook it as she smiled disdainfully—and then like a flash of light a vision floated before her eyes, and she saw in remembrance the lady of the chestnut locks that were glorified by golden glints. She lost no line of her figure, she even noticed the delicious turn of her neck, and observed the small pink ear that peeped from beneath the mass of shining hair. She saw again the downcast eyes with the dark lines of

brows and lashes, the pale cheeks that had softened into tenderest rose when Anatole had accosted her. How should Gabrielle have known that the blush had come from embarrassment not untinged with annoyance? She even remembered that Madeleine's delicate nostril had quivered, and that her hand had perceptibly tightened as she had held up her skirt from the muddy street; and above all, the inn-keeper's daughter could never forget that the lady had smiled when Anatole d'Harcourt had approached.

She was filled with an unreasoning jealousy. "And this is the one who has stolen him from me," she exclaimed, "and she must now also wear the lace!" Gabrielle's face was burning and her eyes were flashing. In one second of anger that stopped her ears so that she heard no sound of coming footsteps, and that blinded her eyes so that she did not see the opening door, she twisted the costly fabric that she held, about her hands, and prepared in a burst of uncontrolled passion to rend it asunder. At the same instant a hand was laid firmly on her arm, and a voice from behind her that sounded both sad and gentle, asked quietly:

"What would you do, Gabrielle? That lace is mine."

It was Anatole.

Dismay, sorrow, fear, following each other in quick succession, drove anger away; and trembling like a leaf she fell at his feet and clasped her hands about his knees.

"Forgive me, monsieur. *De grace!* I beg it of you. It was a wicked dream that made me do it. I was mad, *folle.* I knew not what I was about to do. Tell me that you will pardon me; and do not push your little Gabrielle away."

She was sobbing hysterically, and like a child in terror; and when she lifted her face, bathed in tears, the austere man, in spite of himself, was touched.

"Why should you do this thing?" he asked, coldly, but still calmly.

His tone pierced her heart more than words of harshest scolding could have done, and her sobs came in little gasps as she answered: "Because, monsieur, you have been good to me and have made me presents, and I love you so that I could not bear to have you give this lace to any one else, —not even back to M. de Montfort's mother," she

added quickly with an inspiration of cunning. Anatole must not know at any cost that she was jealous of the younger woman.

"But wherefore not?" he asked quietly, divining perfectly her little stratagem. "She is a lady."

He placed a slight emphasis upon the last word.

"Does monsieur love any one else?" she said.

"Have you a right to ask, Gabrielle? Listen to me, child." He took the lace from her hands and placed it on the table; and then he lifted her from the floor, and sitting down on the arm of the chair, he drew her toward him and placed his hand on hers. "Listen, Gabrielle," he continued, "I have been kind to you always, and yet you try to do me this harm. That hurts me, child, but I forgive you."

She opened her eyes very wide, and the tears dried of themselves when she felt his hand close over hers. "You have always been my little pet and you are still," he said; "and I will give you other things to wear that are much prettier than this old lace, things that have color and shine; but you must promise me that you will never, never again touch what does not belong to you. Do you not know that I could call in a *sergeant-de-ville* to

arrest you, and to carry you away?" He frowned, and she trembled as she clung to him; but he clasped her closely and added: "But I will not do it, little one. I love you too much; and I know that you only did a foolish thing without realizing how wrong it was. I am certain that you are already sorry for it. Is this not so?"

"If monsieur will only pardon me and not send me away, I will serve him faithfully all my life. It is all I ask, and he can give the lace to whom he likes."

"And to make up for what you were about to do," he continued, "you will to-morrow carry a message from me to M. de Montfort, will you not? See how I trust you."

She nodded.

"We will send back the lace, child. He paid it to me as a debt of honor, but he can give me its equivalent in something else. This I cannot touch. I will send him a letter that will explain what I wish. And I shall fold it within the lace to-night, and seal up the package, and direct it to him. In the morning you shall deliver it, and you will give it into his own hands."

"Yes, monsieur."

"I shall be away to-morrow," he went on to say in a deep, grave voice that yet sounded wonderfully gentle. "It is possible that you may hear nothing of me for several days. Important business is taking me to St. Cloud. An opportunity has offered to arrange a little affair of mine, and I wish to settle with de Montfort before I go. Can I depend upon you, Gabrielle? See how generous I am. I not only forgive you, but I trust you again."

"Yes, monsieur," she said, but she thought to herself triumphantly, "the lady will not receive the lace after all. I mean the lady with the beautiful hair who is the only one I care about."

"And Gabrielle," he added, "I want you to understand that this is a matter of great importance. You must swear to me that you will not breathe a word to a living soul of what has passed between us this night." He touched his ring, Antoinette's ring, that she wore. "Remember that we are bound together by this bit of gold that I placed upon your finger myself one night not so very long ago. Look up at me."

She obeyed him, and he looked down into her eyes with a penetrating gaze that fascinated while it made her shiver. "Do not forget," he repeated solemnly, "that this is just between you and me. It is our secret alone."

She was awed in spite of herself, for she felt that there was here something more than she could understand. He drew her still closer to him and kissed her, and the touch of his lips sealed her to his service forever. He had judged her aright. He knew with whom he had to deal. For a second or two they stood thus clasped together; then he walked across the room and took the crucifix from off the wall.

"Kneel down," he commanded in a voice that she dared not disobey; and she sank to her knees at once beside him, for he too had adopted the attitude of prayer. He devoutly kissed the ivory image and handed it to her and she did the same, led on by his invincible will that she feared to question. He laid her hand upon the cross, and placed his own larger one over hers to keep it in place, and said, "Now, Gabrielle, repeat after me what I am about to say;" and she slowly echoed his words when he said them,

though as she did so, her blood turned cold with horror.

"I swear by the Holy Mother of God, and by this symbol of our faith, that I will do as I have promised; and if I fail to keep my word to M. d'Harcourt through any fault of my own, may the Almighty strike me dead. Amen."

A death-like silence followed. She was trembling in every limb, but Anatole's features were as though cut in stone.

Presently he arose and lifting her to her feet, he led her to the window. He flung it wide open and pointed out to the stars and to the spire of Notre Dame.

"Look, my child, the heavenly lights are the sign of hope. They are shining brightly to-night above the Church of Our Lady. She has heard your oath. You are consecrated to a great cause."

The girl was very quiet now, but she laid her hand on his arm and turned toward him a face from which the childishness had fled, giving place to the expression of a suffering womanhood. She did not in the least understand the portent of what he wished, but she accepted his will blindly.

"And if I do this thing will monsieur care for me a little?" Her voice was soft with wistful pleading.

"I care no longer for things earthly, Gabrielle. The time for that is past, but if you do my bidding faithfully, we may meet hereafter in a better world than this,—or else—" but his voice sank so low that she did not catch the qualifying words that followed.

"Go to bed and rest," he added presently. "To-morrow you shall come to me for the package—and you will remember."

He gently led her to the door and held it open as she silently passed out. When the man found himself alone again, he took from out of the bosom of his coat a crushed and faded rose; and he pressed it passionately to his lips. Madeleine had worn it in her dress the night before. And still holding the withered flower in the clasp of his iron hand, he at last lay down to rest.

That night he dreamed that an angel, clad in flowing robes of white, came and stood beside him, and her head was crowned with a glory of shining hair, and she sang to him softly in a voice whose

sweetness surpassed anything he had ever heard before, and the words of the song were:

"Ne laissons passer en vain
Si soudain
Les ans de nostre jeunesse."

They were the very same that he had often heard Madeleine sing in her pleasant home hard by the Tuileries gardens.

CHAPTER XI.

In those days there was an intense excitement in the air, and the birth of the new Empire was attended in Paris by a state of stimulation that pervaded all classes; and no one, not even Napoleon's adversaries, could fail to be affected by the prevailing bustle and stir, glitter and movement of the coming epoch. But while public events were occupying the world at large, each private life also was being rounded out and filled; and Madeleine and Victor, though deeply interested in the tide of current events, still looked into each other's eyes day by day, and became increasingly absorbed in one another. She knew that he meant to ask her to be his wife, for though he had not yet said the word, each look and deed were eloquent with a love that would not longer consent to be silenced; and her woman's sure instinct warned her of this and told her to be on her guard if she wished to keep him from speaking. Her conscience smote her when this conviction first made itself felt, and she imagined that she ought

to discourage him. She knew that in this case, it would be the part of wisdom to send him away; but her heart kept back the words, and a deprecating smile or a faint accent of protest was all the opposition that he met with. These weeks had been the spring-time of Madeleine's life, the sweetest, most unalloyed season of happiness that she had ever known. They had contained the very essence of the careless youth that had hitherto been denied her; and though she had waited for years before it came, when this tender joy at last entered her chastened life, she was overmastered by the perfect contentment that it brought. It was no wonder, therefore, that she hesitated to turn from the bliss before her. The long years of poverty and self-sacrifice that had robbed her of her first youth, already counted as nothing.

She had had but little intercourse with men. The years had been full of care, and Bertrand's older and graver companions had not appealed to her. Once or twice a match had been arranged or at least suggested for her; but her mind had not been in it and her brother had not pressed the suit. This love that was blooming in her life was the one romance of her existence, and

it grew like a fair flower in the garden of her heart.

And yet all the dictates of her reason and of her own lofty soul told her that the match would be not only inappropriate, but that Victor was already bound to some one else, and failing in his engagement both his own and his mother's honor would suffer. It is true she argued that in the existing state of society questions of rank amounted to comparatively little, but she was at the same time quite conscious that a different union from one with herself might insure a brilliant future to the man she loved. She sheltered herself behind the safeguard of her superior age, and tried to deceive her own intelligence into thinking that she might still keep him as a brother. It is always dangerous to temporize. Madeleine obstinately endeavored to blind her eyes to what was surely coming, and persisted in reflecting that if an actual proposal could be averted the happy days might flow on indefinitely, just as they were doing. Things were very well as they were. Why not leave them alone, at least until the end of Victor's furlough, that already loomed up as a spectre, at no great distance before them?

The Bertrands owned a little country-seat not far from Paris, to which they expected to move during the early part of June. It was hidden away among chestnut trees of its own, and it was close by the shady glades of the forest of St. Germain, overlooking the same stretch of beautiful and fertile country that is commanded by the Pavillon Henri IV. and the magnificent terrace of Le Nôtre. It was also within pleasant walking distance of the estate at Versailles where Victor's father had cultivated his renowned roses. The vicinity of the historic old hill-town, with its attractive surroundings and its salubrious air, had been fixed upon long before as a safe retreat for Madeleine and the children during the heated months of summer, and being near the city, Bertrand was able to ride in and out frequently. While he was busy providing for them all, she had found that her days, too, were very full in that cozy nest, as well as in the garden, all aglow with flowers, that she not only loved herself but taught her younger brothers and sister to cultivate.

Victor had heard much of this retired cottage, and it presented to his mind a most alluring picture as he thought of its rose-covered walls over-

shadowed by protecting trees. The same French thrift that had made the most of the garden also prevailed within doors, leaving its trace in every room. Careful housekeeping showed in the simple *salon* as well as in the neat kitchen where the copper vessels shone only a trifle more brightly than the polished tile-floor. Repeated description had made everything familiar to Victor, from the sitting-room to the cool hall where the family took their meals. This ran directly through the house, at one end being the front entrance, and at the other a broad door-like window that opened out on the sunny prospect, and there Venetian blinds partially kept out the glare.

As the increasing warmth enticed the Parisians more and more out of doors, and into the public gardens where they loved to watch the cheerful passing of the people, Victor decided that he would lose no time in joining his friends in the freedom of the real country after they had once established themselves there.

He planned to surprise them as they took their evening meal beneath a spreading chestnut tree that stood like a sentinel beside the house. Mad eleine had told him that on fine days the table was

often spread there. He fancied the white napery, the silver, and the shining glasses. Plain but well-cooked dishes, and desserts and pretty cakes, fashioned by Thérèse's skilful hands, would be served; and he knew that the delectable St. Gervais cream would not be wanting. He could see the row of little glazed earthen-ware cups that had cooled in the depths of the well until their sides were covered with a clinging moisture that also lay like dew upon the broad green leaf fastened over the top of each. They contained Bertrand's favorite after-dinner refection, and were always served with cherry cordial.

On Victor's arrival the family would all spring up in amazement, and Isidore would slap him on the back in hearty welcome and then make a place beside him; the boys and Lili would be vociferous in their greeting, but Madeleine would only look up and smile. And d'Olonet knew that the light would fall through the roof of green leaves and lie softly on her bright locks, and that a little later he and she would wander hand in hand through the sweet-smelling garden all by themselves, leaving the others behind. But Lili would be near. Ah, Lili, with her mocking laugh and her dancing

eyes, Lili, who never tired of tormenting them—she would walk on the other side of the hedge and pretend not to see, but she would peep through the box branches all the same. He knew that he should forgive her, and in the fulness of his heart he felt an affection for her also, for was she not Madeleine's sister?

So the boy dreamed his day-dreams, and the woman he loved dreamed hers, though she tried to put the future from her. Pursuing the train of his reflection Victor imagined that the lawyer would ride home day after day and would always find the young officer sitting or walking with his cherished sister, and d'Olonet dwelt upon the thought of Isidore's pleasant smile, and the cordial grasp of his hand that should greet them when found still together. Bertrand was a good fellow too.

Madeleine had told her constant companion the names of the two big dogs that her brother had had sent up from the Pyrénées to protect the house; and he also knew the color of the one pretty cow that fed in the paddock, and he divided his affection between the advocate's old white mare and the new roan colt. Victor perpetually as-

sured himself that the month of June was the loveliest of all the year, and that as soon as the Bertrands moved out to St. Germain, he, too, would leave the city and take up his quarters in the hotel on the square that faced the stern-faced castle in the town. He was steadily growing stronger and was very nearly well once more. A good walk through the odorous forest every day, when on his way to see his friends, would make a new man of him.

While he was making these pleasant plans, Madeleine was at last schooling herself to realize that when the time came for her to leave Paris their familiar intercourse must cease. At least until then she would remain happy. For once, however, her calculations were all at fault. One never can foresee such things, and the decisive words were spoken just when both she and Victor had least expected them. It all came about quite simply too, as is natural when hearts are so full that one word will make them brim over. They were standing together one afternoon in the empty conservatory, while she explained how her plants had been transferred to her garden in the open air. But one rose-vine remained, and it had

become so entwined in the lattice that its removal was impossible, so it had been left where it was, with a fresh supply of earth for its sustenance. With that exception, her winter bower was a thing of the past, and only deserted shelves and a few broken pots remained to remind one of its departed glory. The sight sent a little chill of disappointment through the young man, for he associated the beginning of all his happiness with the wealth of beauty and of fragrance that he had found there on that evening which now seemed so long ago, when he had met Madeleine for the first time.

How different everything was now! As he looked out upon the crowded street, and watched the hurrying people pass along, all busy with their own affairs, he became thoughtful; and then he turned to glance at his companion who stood silently beside him, and he felt even more strongly than he ever had before that he and she were far removed from every one else in the wide world. The distant hum of the city's life came to them as they stood side by side, quite alone, in the open window; and Victor remembered with a pang that the time was soon coming when the duties and

cares of his career would claim him, and the camp and the army would call him away from his present existence of peace and ease. It all came home to him with a poignant force that afternoon; and as he stood beside his love his hand lay on the hilt of his sword, and he looked out into the limitless blue of the summer sky, noticing, half unconsciously, how the slanting rays of the sun touched with gold the tops of the chestnut trees in the Tuileries Gardens, while he felt instinctively that the time to speak had come.

"Mademoiselle," he said very softly, "my long furlough is nearly over, and, thanks to you, I have been saved to take up my country's service again. No one can ever know what these weeks have been to me; and now it makes me happy to think that before I go back to my regiment, I shall still have time to see you settled in your country home. I had meant to surprise you there, but now I ask: may I come?" He did not speak like a love-sick boy, but his tones were the serious ones of an earnest man.

The time had arrived for Madeleine's resolution to be put in effect, but she gave no answer and only plucked nervously at the petals of the roses

that she wore in her belt. She had had no idea that it would be so terribly hard to speak. Her heart stood still, and every drop of blood seemed to congeal, leaving her cold and stunned; and her lips refused to form the unuttered words that she tried to bring forth. It was only what she had anticipated, but when the moment came for a time all her strength left her.

"The world is a very busy place," he continued, "and life's duties call to all of us; but there are resting-places to be found, and mine has been here, mademoiselle. I return to the army a better and a stronger man for having known you."

Something still rose in her throat and choked her, but when she lifted her honest eyes to meet his gaze, and forced herself at last to speak, there was only a slight tremble in her voice, though her exceeding pallor betrayed her agitation, as she answered:

"*Mon ami*, do not follow me. Your path of duty is elsewhere, and it lies clearly before you. Go, and may the saints be with you."

She turned, and leaving him standing where he was, she re-entered the *salon* slowly and leaned against the harpsichord for support.

"May I not at least take a hope with me, Madeleine?" he pleaded as he followed her. "It will inspire and help me, and it will lead me through all dangers so that I may win laurels and bring them back to you. If you will but give me this, I will ask for nothing more."

She could not answer, but she waved him back with her hand.

Then overpowered by a rush of impulsive feeling he fell on one knee beside her, and lifting her hand to his lips he pressed them to it passionately; and still holding the unresisting cold fingers within his own warm, firm grasp, he looked up into her face. His was full of emotion and of a strength born of earnest purpose. At that moment he would have willingly died for her. All differences of station or of age, all obstacles of every kind, were annihilated by the intense fervor of his desire. Prudence, patience, remembrance of other obligations, were all cast to the winds as he murmured fervently: "Madeleine, I adore you. Will you be my wife?"

Then the room became still as death, though she fancied that she could hear the throbbing of their beating hearts.

He kept her hand in his, but presently he arose and standing beside her, tall and grave, he looked down into her eyes as he waited for his answer. She felt for the first time that he could be a real protector to her, and that his strong arm and broad shoulder would be a safe and sure support. She longed to let her head fall there and take its rest; and a conviction dawned upon her that their union might be a nobler one than she had ever dreamed of. The boy she had helped had become a very man, strong and tender. She knew that if she went with him it would be well with her. Yet, had she the right to do so? For a few seconds she hesitated, but it seemed an eternity to them both before she drew herself together with determined resolve, and laid her hand as though in benediction upon the brown head bending toward her.

"My friend," she said calmly, though the sound of her own voice sounded as though it came from a distance or belonged to some one else, the accent was so changed, "my friend, it cannot be. Our paths in life are different; you are noble, I am of the people. Besides, you are not free. Go and forget me, Victor. Win for your wife some one younger than I; some one that your mother will

accept with open arms, one of your own race. Go, and my prayers shall follow you."

As she continued speaking, her voice grew firmer, but her lips blanched, and at the very last she could not control their slight quivering.

"I will not leave you, Madeleine, I swear it," cried Victor, desperately. "You are young enough for me. What do a couple of years matter when hearts are true? And as for rank, there is none that can surpass the equality of love."

"But your honor, Victor? You are bound to another, and remember your duty to your mother."

"There can be no truer honor than in our union. Tell me that you love me a little."

"It is because I love you that I bid you go," said the quiet voice beside him. "Because our greatest happiness lies in doing what is right; and, dear, you know that you are not free. Do not add to my pain, Victor, for my heart is breaking."

Then he slowly raised his head and placing his two hands on her shoulders, he looked straight down into her eyes. His face was as white as hers, but, though his voice was husky, there was a real manhood in his words.

"I will leave you because you send me away,"

he said in strangled tones, "but do not forget that I mean to win not only honor and glory but my release also, and when I return I shall have a right to stay."

He crushed her hands tightly between his own, and tears were in his eyes when he stooped to pick up the rose she had dropped. After that he left her without another word, and she heard his hurried steps on the stairs as they passed out into the street. It was all over.

Anatole and Victor had thus each become possessed of one of Madeleine's roses, but, while d'Harcourt's was red as blood, d'Olonet's was of the purest white. She had seen him lift it to his lips as he left the room.

Then this strong, calm woman, who had, as long as he was there, controlled the outward signs of an emotion that was wearing her out, gave way entirely, and flinging herself down on the sofa, she cried as though her heart would break.

The room seemed utterly lonely, and the bright sunshine appeared only to mock her woe. It was in vain that she repeated over and over again that it was all right, that everything had happened as she had determined that it should; and that even

if he were within hearing she would not call him back. The old arguments were powerless to soothe the pain. His bright boyishness had supplied the very spice of gayety that her own life had lacked. Only after he had really gone had she fully realized the utter blank left by his absence. "I am too tired, too careworn, too much older," she repeated again and again. "Besides he must do what is right, and while linking his life to the freshness of first youth, please his mother; but it is hard, bitterly hard, to be left alone." The iron had entered into her soul, and prostrated by her grief, though changeless in her resolution, she lay on the couch entirely unconscious of the lapse of time until her brother Isidore came in somewhat later and found her still there, with hands cold as ice and with her beautiful hair dishevelled, though her tears had ceased to flow.

With a rare tact for which she was grateful he expressed no surprise, but he quietly knelt beside her and laid a caressing hand upon her head; and as he gathered her closely to him, she felt that it was a comfort to rest upon his faithful shoulder and to sob out her trouble there.

"Oh, my brother, how I love you. You are the

only help I have left in the world, for I have sent him away from me forever."

Like a sensible man he asked no questions, but he patted her hand gently as he whispered: "Poor little one, poor little one."

When Victor reached the street his head was in a whirl, and as he pushed his way through the throngs in the thoroughfares he was conscious of nothing but his own loss. The blow had been stunning. In one moment he had been robbed of all that had made existence beautiful and desirable, and he felt absolutely desolate. Strange to say, he held his head high as he pressed on, and though suffering keenly he was not cast down, for the opposition that he had met with had filled him with a growing excitement. There was at least something left in life that was worth fighting for. The knowledge of Madeleine's firmness of character ought to have discouraged him more, but strong in the conviction of the power of his own love, and full of a belief in the sweetness of life, he refused to despair.

He walked on with a springing step in spite of the sharp pain in his heart. After all, the world was fair and wide; he was well and strong again,

and he had his sword; the future would bring him fame. Other soldiers of fortune had won great names; why should he not do the same, now that he had cast in his lot with the powerful Napoleon? Advancement bestowed by the new sovereign was what he would strive for. The Empire was both Madeleine's political hope and his own. They were living in modern times, and the old titles already counted for little. His pulses throbbed and tingled as he heard the strains of martial music, and when the tramp of marching feet came down the street, he felt eager for the active service of the army. He would not allow himself to be cast down, but he would throw himself into the vortex of the new era's life, and he would struggle with all his might to win the laurels that he had promised to bring back to her. But a reaction followed at last as he thought of the time he might have to wait. Perhaps even when he returned, a recognized hero, Madeleine would still be firm. The time might be years hence, and beyond the terrors of war he dreaded the interview with his mother that was to free him from his first engagement.

"And pray, who is this *demoiselle* of the *bourgeoisie?*" he could hear the great lady say, and he

recoiled from her cold accent of contempt. He knew that he could not bear it.

He walked on at a tremendous pace, taking long strides, and looking neither to the right or to the left, his mind intent only upon his own misery. The physical exertion was a relief. The people looked after him in surprise as he passed, and they wondered what it was that carried him on at such a rate, but he never noticed them. His thoughts were far away, and he alternately repeated to himself Madeleine's last words, and lost himself in conjectures as to how he might lead her to change her mind.

The poor boy was going through the most perplexing trouble he had ever known, and with the eager resistance of youth, he refused to accept fate. He vacillated therefore between hope and despair, and wore himself out in the exercise of protesting activity. The thought of his little convent-bound bride filled him with a positive disgust, and he felt impelled to start at once for Dresden in order to tell his mother that her well-laid plans had been frustrated. What cared he for that rich marriage portion? Here was Madeleine, a very queen among women. With her modest *dot* and

with his sword they might defy the world—if she would only listen to him.

"Ah, *ma mère*," he thought, "you who have loved me always have prepared a sad fate for your son. I hate to grieve you, but wed I will not with the one you have chosen."

Madeleine's own words returned to him, and he could not but admit their truth, for he knew as well as she did that his high-born relations would never accept the lawyer's sister; and that a marriage with her would inevitably cut him off from them. In his growing distress he clinched his fists. He even began to envy Anatole who was always reckless and unmoved, and apparently free from care, though in the midst of misfortunes. Then he thought of their long companionship and he remembered with something like self-reproach that he had not seen the latter for days. He had been so taken up with his visits to the Bertrands that he had not thought of his friend, and it now occurred to him for the first time that Anatole had not been near him either. He determined to look up his old comrade on the morrow. Life had become so lonely!

He went about the rest of that afternoon in a

maze, and finally, tired out with fatigue and trouble, he returned to his lodging, and in nervous haste began to prepare for an immediate return to the army. In the overwrought condition of his mind he had been unable to dine, but toward night he went out and ordered a bottle of wine and a roll of bread at the nearest *café*. As he entered his own door a little later, his foot struck upon something that lay before the entrance of the house where he lived. When he picked it up, he saw to his surprise, that it was a neat package sealed with wax and directed to de Montfort in Anatole's hand.

He rang at once for the *concierge* and asked if any one had called, and receiving a reply in the negative, he took it for granted that what he had found had been dropped by one of the two men, or by their messenger, and feeling glad that it had fallen into his own hands rather than into a stranger's, he slipped the roll of what appeared to be something soft in his pocket and thought no more about it. When he reached his room he gazed with positive despair at his scattered belongings that lay about in hopeless confusion, just as he had left them when he had gone out to partake of

that frugal evening meal. He had pulled out drawers and had emptied shelves in his haste, and now he only longed to be gone. His sense of absolute loneliness remained to oppress him, and he felt incapable of proceeding with his work; and as he paused to contemplate the condition of chaos that reigned about him, his face assumed an expression of utter helplessness that would have been comical, had it not been for the real pain written there. And who shall find it in his heart to blame him, if, while alone with his shattered hopes, the boy shed a few hot tears? He was none the less of a man, none the less of a good fellow for that; but he was young, he had been bitterly disappointed, and his emotional Gallic temperament had been shaken to its very foundations. He had been saved for his life's work through Madeleine's care, but the sun of his existence had gone out.

CHAPTER XII.

When Gabrielle went to get the lace from Anatole on the morning after their conversation she found him very quiet and grave. He was dressed with exceeding care. Every detail of his toilet showed that it had been attended to with fastidious thought. As his white fingers lay on the table beside the package they looked like wax, and the girl noticed that the blue veins traced upon them showed with peculiar distinctness. He had pushed to one side the *faience* coffee-pot and the remnant of the roll left from his breakfast. His morning meal had not tempted him. Having been freshly shaven, his smooth chin was shaded by the tint always left behind a dark growth of hair, and this was particularly noticeable on account of his paleness. His linen had been done up with extra care so that his shirt-front and ruffles were faultless, and he wore his most presentable clothes that had been so well watched over by Amand Gourtain that they still made a favorable appearance. Careful as Anatole was at all times of his dress, there

was something about it on that day that denoted especial thought.

Although Gabrielle did not know it, he had been out very early that morning and had confessed to a priest and received absolution, thus ridding himself of the burden of sins accomplished, and remaining satisfied to shoulder alone the responsibility of the one to come. He greeted her very kindly when he opened the door in answer to her timid knock, and as they stood opposite each other he looked entirely the fine gentleman, kind and indulgent, but with whom the taking of a liberty would be impossible, and not in the least like a man with a desperate resolve in his heart who was just about to commit an awful deed.

How should she have known that at last an opportunity had offered for him to mix with the Emperor's household at St. Cloud, and that this would bring him in close proximity to the great man? Anatole had broken his fast, and he had also paid for a bottle of old wine, for his strength must be kept up and his hand must not shake. Afterward, if his own life paid the forfeit, it would still be well. "Jacques Clement did his work also at St. Cloud," thought d'Harcourt. "The

augury is good." Of course the girl had no suspicion of this as she stood waiting for the package she was to carry to de Montfort, and she did not know the import of the paper carefully wrapped within the old lace.

Anatole gave his directions with great distinctness, and she listened to them silently. A barrier had arisen between them since the evening before, and she felt already as though he were going away for always, or as though he belonged to some one else. She felt no inclination to talk and only answered quietly: "Yes, monsieur," and carefully hid what he gave her within the bosom of her dress. Then she followed him down stairs and saw him exchange a few words with her father before he left the house. When he passed out and went down the Rue des Trois Canettes, she watched him until he was out of sight. She never forgot just how he looked that day. Each line of his figure remained indelibly stamped upon her mind.

She was still laboring under the spell he had cast about her the night before, and her love bade her believe that he was engaged in some great and good business, though her keen wit, sharpened

by contact with men of all kinds, taught her to suspect that he was involved in some questionable scheme. But it was not for her to ask or even to surmise what it was; she was prepared to do his will blindly.

She mechanically fulfilled her morning duties. She tidied up the dining-room and the bar. She swept out the court. She washed down the stone steps, and she remembered to water the flowers blooming in pots behind the leaded panes of the kitchen window. As she went about her menial tasks she glanced at her hands and murmured in discontent because the work had made them coarse and red—so unlike M. Anatole's.

He had told her that he had ceased to care for earthly things, and the best hope that he had held out to her had been to meet him in another world. She smiled with a superior knowledge as she thought of this, for she had no intention of losing him altogether, and she was sure that the one they lived in might be made abundantly bright and gay. But if that was not to be, she determined that she would at least follow him wherever he went, and that she would serve him faithfully all her life. Once she had seen a play in the theatre

where a knight's lady-love, dressed as a page, had followed him to the wars. She could do as much, and besides the story had ended well. The knight had married the lady after all.

At last she was free. Her father glanced over the spectacles on his nose and went toilsomely through the pages of his ledger. Her mother and the maids, as well as the one serving-man, were busy in the kitchen or the court-yard where there was a conglomeration of household effects. Sundry bits of washing were being hung out to dry, and kegs and casks had to be tapped or rolled into the cellar. A few chickens in cages had to be fed. The court-yard was the catch-all of the superfluous paraphernalia of Gourtain's calling.

As his pretty daughter stood under the dark archway of the entrance her thoughts were unceasingly occupied with her father's aristocratic guest. She remembered that he had been unusually gentle in manner that morning, and when he had bade her farewell he had done so with great courtesy and kindness. After he had left the house he had turned his head to look at it again, and at her also as she had stood within the doorway. A few steps further on a young child had met him, and

had held up a flower for sale; and Gabrielle had seen him feel in his pocket for a copper, but she had not known that he had dropped a silver bit instead into the small hand. She only noticed with surprise that he stooped to kiss the little one on its forehead. What had made him so tender that day?

Some of those old lanes and streets of Paris were surprisingly sleepy and dead. The swarming life remained behind the walls until late in the day, when it emerged for recreation. Occasionally a woman leaned out of a window or over a balcony for a breath of air, but all was quiet in the Rue des Trois Canettes. There was scarcely a sound of passing vehicles, and there being no sidewalk, the people who passed, walked in the middle of the way, only avoiding the slight incline of the pavement that slanted toward the middle of the street, thus forming the semblance of a gutter that carried off the drainage, and from which ascended the nauseous smell that is apt to haunt such forgotten by-ways. Now and then from under a low doorway or from out of a window came snatches of song, a few poorly dressed children played on the uneven cobble-stones, and dabbled in the discolored

and soapy water as they sailed their boats made of chips. A dog dozed in the sun, the breeze moved the canopy of early green that hung over a mildewed and crumbling wall, and the sun caught on the glaze of pottery standing without the windows on the sills. A few gay rags fluttered in the air that dried them, and above and below the sparrows darted and flew as they twittered, and quarrelled, and made love over their spring housekeeping. High above all spread the serene blue sky, and against the azure background rose the towers and spire of the great cathedral. It was the same quiet picture that Gabrielle had seen every day of her life, but she had never noticed its quaint charm, and she did not see it now. Monsieur Anatole had passed. The frame was there, but what constituted the picture to her was gone.

With a little sigh she came to herself and felt for the package securely hidden from sight in her bosom; and then with a backward glance, to see that no one saw her, she stepped out of the door and hurried away. Down the street she hastened and out into the open square. She paused a second before the church, and as she thought of d'Harcourt's words she involuntarily crossed her-

self; then she passed on through the ways filled with people, past the shops, and cab-stands, and flower-stalls, out upon the broad bridge that crossed the river, and on through the bustle of the throbbing heart of the great city.

She wore nothing on her head, after the manner of her class; she did not even carry a parasol, and the sun beat down upon her unheeded. With her hand clutched on the hidden treasure she swiftly threaded her way through the passing crowd, neither pausing or looking to the right or left, not even noticing the various sights along her path that as a usual thing would have proved most distracting. Arrived at last at de Montfort's lodging, she rang the bell and asked the way to his room.

"Monsieur de Montfort?" asked the door-keeper with suspicion. "What can a pretty girl like you want with him?"

"I know him well," replied Gabrielle, nervously. "He often comes to my father's inn, and now I bring him a message."

The man laughed. "Give it to me, my treasure. I will deliver it safely when M. de Montfort comes home. He is away."

The girl was nearly crying. "I cannot give it

to any one but the gentleman himself. When and where can I find him?"

"Who knows? He has gone to St. Cloud," said the *concierge*, "but M. de Boissy, who lives down the street, may be able to tell you when he is to return."

She hurried on to de Boissy's door, but the identical news met her there. He also had gone in the same direction.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed in perplexity. "Has all the world gone to St. Cloud? What does it mean?"

She hung about for a time, but she could learn nothing more, and at last she went home feeling indescribably uneasy at still being possessed of the old lace. She wanted to get it off her hands. The next day the same thing happened, and the next, and then her anxiety turned to alarm. No news came from Anatole, the other young men kept away from the inn, and it was becoming very difficult for her to get away herself, for her parents disapproved of her wandering about the streets in search of amusement, for they thought it was that only that took her out. Her mother chided her for laziness and would hardly let her

from her sight. Nothing was heard of de Montfort.

This lasted for some days, and at last the suspense and uncertainty became unbearable, and Gabrielle could endure it no longer. One day, it was on the very afternoon that Victor had paid his last visit to Madeleine, she determined upon a course of action. This was no less than to apply in person to the lady of the burnished golden locks for news of Anatole, though she was the very person for whom she had feared at one time that the lace was destined. Gabrielle's heart beat wildly at the thought of seeing her for herself, but the longer she entertained the idea the surer she became that this was the only means in her power by which she might solve the difficulty. She remembered well the house that she had seen her enter with d'Harcourt, and she never doubted that it was there that the lady lived. As she imagined herself being brought face to face with the object of her jealousy, she became increasingly eager to put her plan in execution. She could then at least see if the lady was really as lovely as she had seemed to her eyes the first time she had looked at her. She wondered if she would be kind, or if

she would only spurn the little daughter of the people. But something whispered to her troubled heart that she was safe from anger at any rate, and that this course appeared to be the only means by which she might find Anatole again in order to tell him that she had been faithful, and that it was through no fault of hers that the lace was still undelivered. Perhaps the lady would take pity on her and help her, though of course she should not know what the message was. Gabrielle felt a growing pride also that she and d'Harcourt had a secret from which the other was excluded, and this was so gratifying to her, that she was almost reconciled to her rival's existence, and for the moment even ceased to hate her.

So she set out for Victor's house precipitately, never dreaming that she had made a mistake, and throwing to the winds all thought of her parents' anger that she would be obliged to face on her return.

Gabrielle was, however, doomed to disappointment, for when she arrived at the door she had seen Madeleine enter, the man who answered the bell could give her no satisfaction. She described minutely the person she was in quest of, but he

was certain that no such beautiful lady was among his "*locataires.*" He had only families, and at the top of the house a few single gentlemen. At last, however, a light dawned upon him, and he remembered that when M. d'Olonet had been ill a lady had visited him with her brother, M. Bertrand, the advocate. Monsieur d'Harcourt had accompanied them. Probably he or M. d'Olonet would know the address she wanted. The invalid had been well for some time, and his friends had ceased to call. Moreover he was out, and had not left word when he expected to return. The man was cross and unwilling to be interviewed, and having told her that he had no idea of d'Harcourt's own address, he shut the door in her face.

Distracted with worry Gabrielle did not know what to do. She feared that she might not be able to escape from the inn again, and her only hope seemed to be in waylaying d'Olonet in order to beg from him some means of communication either with Anatole or his lovely friend. She waited, therefore, a long time in the street, walking up and down before the house, hoping each second that he might come home. She had not eaten a mouthful of food since morning, and she at last

began to feel faint, but she had not a sou with which to buy bread. Accustomed to working in the house, she had always been in the habit of carrying a parasol when in the street, but to-day the sun had been beating for hours on her unprotected head and had ended by making it ache furiously, and this was greatly increased by her long fast.

As the afternoon advanced this feeling was augmented, for she did not dare to leave her post, and she yet feared to remain, and all the time the little package weighed her down like lead. She stationed herself for the last time, in the despairing hope that d'Olonet would appear, under the heavy architectural work of the doorway just beneath the swinging iron bracket of the lantern; and crouching down in her fatigue, she gave herself still ten minutes in which to wait for him. The pain in her head increased; a growing faintness from lack of food, and prolonged exposure to the sun, which can be very hot as June approaches, and to which she was unaccustomed for so long a time, and anxiety and bootless fatigue, did the rest. At first she reeled, then everything before her grew unreal and misty, then faded away, and a blank succeeded. Gabrielle had fainted.

It was not long before she was surrounded by a garrulous but sympathetic crowd. Water was procured, her dress was loosened, her face was fanned by a ragged hat held in the hand of a perfect stranger. Then it was that an acquaintance of her father's passed and chanced to recognize her.

"Why," said he, "that is Gabrielle, the daughter of the tavern-keeper in the Rue des Trois Canettes. I am driving a load of pottery over the river, and I will take her to the *Sapin Vert. Quelle misère!* What will her parents say?"

Kind hands lifted the girl into the wagon and placed her on a bed of blankets and straw; and more dead than alive she was driven away. It was not until she was aroused by the motion of the cart going over the bridge, and by the fresh air blown in her face from off the river, that she sat up, and in the first second of returning consciousness grasped at her breast. The package had gone. It had fallen unnoticed from out of her loosened clothes when she had been carried away; and overmastered by terror as she realized this truth, she bowed her face in her hands and wept bitterly. She begged frantically to be al-

lowed to return in order to look for what she had lost, and she called it a trinket to avert suspicion. The man who drove her only laughed and would not heed her, saying that if lost the object had been picked up already and that he had no time to return. For her comfort he suggested that the *concierge* might have found it and would restore her property.

But, as we know, when Victor at last came home, it was he who found the package; and at the very moment when Gabrielle was bewailing her loss and was crying as though her heart would break, he was sitting disconsolately in his room amid the confusion of his packing, and, though the lace lay in his pocket, he gave it no thought. In his own distress he had completely forgotten that it was there.

CHAPTER XIII.

He was still sitting in his room with his mind much perturbed when de Boissy entered. Victor saw at once that he was laboring under the most intense excitement, but he was so absorbed in his own trouble that it made less impression on him than it might have done at another time.

"*Mon cher*," said the newcomer as he approached and laid his hands on his friend's shoulders, "I bring you a message in great haste from Anatole."

"Well?" answered the other, absent-mindedly.

"But you must listen," continued his visitor, impatiently, "for it is very important. Anatole is in trouble."

"He is always in trouble," said d'Olonet with growing irritation. "What does he want? Money? I have hardly any myself, but he can have half of what is left."

"No," said the other almost angrily, "it is not money. If you will only pay a little attention to what I am saying, I will explain everything. Why,

man, you look as though you had not a friend in the world, and did not care to help your best comrade. Your thoughts are somewhere else. Come down from out of the clouds."

"Ah, Raoul," said Victor, as his eyes filled, "I have had a misfortune also. I am stunned. I cannot think."

"But you must think," answered de Boissy roughly, and his voice became harsh with excitement and impatience, "for I have not a second to lose. Don't sit there looking like a scared owl. Pull yourself together, *mon ami;* you are needed."

Victor laughed, but it was the very ghost of merriment, a poor, shadowy sort of a thing; but seeing that there was really something of moment to hear, he kicked away a pile of coats that lay on the floor, and turning to de Boissy he prepared to listen.

The other pulled out a chair and straddling across it, he folded his arms over the back, and began to speak rapidly.

"I told you that Anatole was in trouble, no matter how or about what. He is in a serious predicament. That is enough for the present. When you see him, you can ask for the details, and he

will tell you all himself. He went out to St. Cloud a week ago. He had business there, or at least he thought he had; and he hung about the place for a couple of days hoping to meet the man with whom he had an affair. Are you listening?" he asked sharply, seeing that Victor's eyes had wandered.

"Yes," answered d'Olonet smiling. He supposed it was an affair of honor, and he considered it extraordinary that Anatole managed to become so often involved in such matters.

De Boissy went on. "Well, the chance was delayed. The man he had hoped to meet was indisposed, so d'Harcourt waited on at the inn, hoping each day that he might be able to see him. The very morning that Anatole left Paris, de Montfort and I called to see him, and finding that he had gone out to St. Cloud, we followed him. We guessed at once what his business was and we wanted to be on hand. It happened, however, that this annoyed him, so Jules returned to the city, but I remained for another day. It seems that when de Montfort arrived in Paris he found that he too was in trouble. He did not dare to go to his own rooms for the police were looking for him, and

Anatole's inn was also watched. Not knowing what else to do, he hid in my lodging, and I found him there when I returned. I might as well tell you that we are all three 'wanted,' but Anatole is in hiding, and de Montfort is already far on his way to England. He will sleep in Calais to-night. Will you help us?"

"You must tell me the whole truth first," said Victor decidedly, for he began to feel really alarmed. "However you may all care to risk your character as men of honor, I, at least, will not disgrace my uniform. What in the world have gentlemen to do with police?"

He folded his arms and paced up and down the room as he waited.

"It is nothing, a mere *bagatelle*," said de Boissy airily as he snapped his fingers. "It is always easy for a man about town to fall into these little complications. It will pass. I posted out to St. Cloud to-day to warn Anatole, and he is safely hidden elsewhere now. It will be better so for a few days. In the meantime he sends you a commission. He is not to be trusted to do it himself. Imagine his indiscretion! When the Emperor went out to drive this afternoon, d'Harcourt actu-

ally stood among the crowd to see him pass. Such rashness is incredible when one is in danger of arrest. He attracted attention to himself also, for he pressed so closely to the front that he was kicked by one of the horses of the escort, and fell just as the *cortège* passed. Will you do what he asks?"

But Victor's mind had wandered again, and he was wondering if he might dare to go once more to Madeleine in order to bid her farewell before he left Paris himself. Inaction had become hateful to him, and he longed for his duties in the army. Though he had hardly heard all that de Boissy was saying, when he caught the words "safely hidden" he started in real concern.

"How can I say before I know what it is that he wants? But I tell you, Raoul, I can have nothing to do with secret doings, whatever they are. I will risk my life at any time for Anatole, and he knows that as well as I do. Tell me the whole truth now, and set my mind at rest by assuring me that his honor is not at stake, and I will gladly do anything. What have you all been about?"

"*Mon cher*, do not worry about the honor of An-

atole. He is a gentleman," said Raoul, impressively.

"Yes," assented Victor, with a sigh of relief, as he tried to reassure himself, "d'Harcourt is that, but what in the name of reason have the police to do with gentlemen? Have done, I tell you, with this policy of evasion."

"Have a little patience," answered de Boissy, soothingly, though he with difficulty controlled his own temper. "You shall know everything. Anatole was simply crazy, when he heard from me today that Jules de Montfort had started for England, without first hunting up a servant of d'Harcourt's who had in charge various papers of importance, but the truth was, he had no time. There was a girl, too, mixed up in the case, I believe, and there was a debt of honor to redeem. I asked no questions, but I heard some mention of old lace, an heirloom, I imagine. It was something that nearly concerned them both. When I left him, Anatole was raving, and he gave me this letter for you, which will explain everything. Now I am off."

He arose hastily and handed Victor a folded paper, but as the latter was about to break the

seal he paused to ask: "Why do you not attend to such errands yourself, Raoul?"

"*Mille-tonnerres!* I have no time either. I must get out of Paris to-night. It is quixotic of Anatole to make such a fuss about hunting up that girl. I can do nothing, for I am too well known at the inn where she lives;—and besides, I must look out for my own skin now. I am really going. Good-by."

He bolted through the door and down the stairs, leaving Victor with the half-opened note in his hand. Stuffing it into his pocket he darted after de Boissy, but the other was too quick for him. Reaching the entrance first, he passed through, and slammed the heavy door behind him. By the time d'Olonet got to the street de Boissy was out of sight, and all efforts to trace him proved useless. Disturbed and angry, Victor returned at last to his own room to read the unwelcome communication. With his head wearily supported on his hand, he perused the letter, and he saw at the first glance that he had to do with something of most serious import. He frowned as he read, and blamed himself for having let Raoul escape. The epistle ran thus:

"Victor, do you know that the love I bear you is greater than a brother's? Were it not so, I would not approach you now, but you are the only one that I have left in the world to whom I can turn for help. Forgive me for the errors of the past; think kindly of me in the future, and remember that, whatever else I may have done, I have always loved you better than my life. For the sake of the long friendship that has united us since boyhood, I adjure you to fulfil without question the supplication that I am about to make of you. Go to the *Sapin Vert* in the Rue des Trois Canettes, hard by the church of Notre Dame, for I dare trust no one else to bear this message, and seek to get speech with Gabrielle the inn-keeper's daughter. Do not do this in the tavern; simply learn to know her there, and then meet her outside—in the church, at the market—I care not where. When you find her alone, tell her that I have great need of what she has in her keeping, and then you must bring her or send her to me. She has valuable papers of mine in her possession, but she will give them into no hands but mine or de Montfort's, not even into yours, though I send you—and he has gone to England. He has de-

serted the cause like a traitor at the first alarm. I am in very serious trouble, Victor, and if my hiding-place were discovered it would go hard with me. The disposal of those papers is a matter of life and death, perhaps of many lives; and I will not leave here until I can see and speak with Gabrielle. The girl was to deliver them to de Montfort from me, but he has kept out of her way—and I know that she would die rather than betray her trust. She will come to me if you will show her the way. You are not known at the *Sapin Vert.* Moreover, your uniform will disarm suspicion and your risk will be slight. The papers are wrapped within a web of rare old lace that is worthy of an Empress' attire. It is fine and of choicest workmanship—it is fit for a king's ransom. That shall be for your bride. Tell Madeleine that if any prayers can help me through the fires of Purgatory, hers will be the only ones capable of the arduous task. One other thing I ask of you. Some time, when these troubled days are over, say to your sister Antoinette from me, that in this hour of my need I sent her greeting, and that I desired her to know that I have loved her always as a brother through the vicissitudes of

my troubled life, though I did not realize how it was until now. As I have waited here in solitude and thought, many things have become clear to me. Bid her to be happy and to thank Heaven that she has been spared from linking her life with mine. I write as a dying man, for if they come I will not be taken alive. Yet I will live, if it be possible, for I have still a great work to do. Lastly, I am hidden here at Chardon's, the wine-merchant of Auteuil. He is true to me. His messenger will bring you a basket of wine to-morrow. Samples, you understand, for sale. If you will undertake my commission, keep the bottles; if you refuse, send them back. The porter knows nothing about me, but in this way I can receive your answer. Raoul can do naught, for he is a marked man. Burn this at once, and remember that what I ask is the only request that I have ever made of you.

"A. d'H."

When Victor had finished reading these words for the second time, he sat quite still, looking thoughtfully before him; then he held the paper in the flame of the candle and watched while it was slowly consumed, leaving only crisp, black, curling scraps behind it. He felt crushed by the

accumulation of worry and trouble that overwhelmed him, and as he tried to disentangle the confused threads of information, he suddenly recollected the mysterious package that he had picked up at his door. He felt for it in his pocket, and taking it out he examined it closely. As it lay on his palm, there came to him, like a flash of lightning, the remembrance of the strange letter he had received from Anatole before his illness, and he now, by some process of intuition, connected it with the matter in hand. He had completely forgotten the epistle during the weeks that had been filled with such new, sweet experiences for himself, and his fears having been once disarmed, there had been nothing in d'Harcourt's manner to incline his friend to suspect him of hidden schemes. Victor's first vague mistrust had vanished, but now his fears were aroused again, and knowing Anatole's fierce adherence to the royalist cause, he concluded at once that he was plotting against the Empire. As he looked at the package, directed in his friend's fine but legible writing to de Montfort, and felt that it contained a roll of something of a soft texture, he would have given worlds to ascertain what it was, and would have

been only too thankful had he felt justified in destroying it then and there. Could this be what Anatole had wanted? Had the girl been less true than he had supposed? Had what he held been dropped on purpose for him to pick up, or had it fallen there by accident? Victor was in a desperate quandary. At one moment he felt that it was his duty to deliver the package to the authorities at once;—and then he recoiled from the thought of harming his friend, the friend who had saved his life and who had thrown himself on his mercy without fear—and besides, what he had found might only concern his private affairs. But the inner conviction grew so strong within him that what he held was of dangerous character, that he started up to call de Boissy back, and then returned to his seat with a grim smile as he realized that he was already far beyond his reach. The words, "It is a matter of life and death, perhaps of many lives," kept ringing in his ears, and he cursed himself for his own carelessness. Why had he let Raoul escape? He had no means of finding out what it all meant, and did not even then suspect the full extent of Anatole's villany, but he came to a conclusion at last. Of course there was but

one thing to be done, for a gentleman and a soldier never betrays his trust, so he carefully placed the parcel in his breast pocket, as he determined to keep it until it could be gotten rid of conscientiously, but he resolved not to be caught in such a predicament again. He decided that he would see Gabrielle without delay, and that he would take her himself to his friend; but then he would demand the immediate destruction of the package, unless he received absolute proof of its harmless character. After that he would tell d'Harcourt plainly that he would at any time risk his own life to serve him; but when his country was concerned, his duty to "*la Patrie*" came even before loyalty to his friend, and he could not countenance in any way what would be untrue to the cause he believed in. Private matters were one thing, but he was an officer sworn to the service of the tricolor.

He was very unhappy, for in spite of everything he loved Anatole truly, and the perplexing situation, coming at the end of a most trying day, was almost too much for him. Worn out with conflicting emotions, he flung himself, all dressed as he was, upon the bed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

Towards morning he was awakened by a loud

knock on his door, and when it was opened from without with scant ceremony, a squad of soldiers entered, led by a *sergeant* who carried a lantern under his arm. The latter advanced promptly to the bed, and Victor sat up, half aroused and quite bewildered by this sudden invasion of intruders. The flickering light that the leader carried revealed the confusion in the room, and it also showed that the young man was still dressed. Nothing appeared to escape the notice of the officer in charge, and he laid his hand on d'Olonet's shoulder, saying sternly as he did so: "We are looking for one Anatole d'Harcourt. I arrest you, sir, in the name of the Emperor."

"That is not my name," said the other, springing to his feet, as he felt an instant realization of coming evil. "What brings you into the house of an honest man at this hour?"

The *sergeant* only placed the lantern upon the table, from where its pale rays continued to light the scene.

"I regret the necessity, monsieur," he replied, "but we shall be obliged to search you."

The remembrance of what lay in his pocket flashed through the captive's mind, and he

glanced about quickly, but there was no loophole of escape, and the window was several stories from the ground. The officer followed his look, and he also took note of the clothes, and boots, and spurs that littered the floor. His men simply grounded their arms and waited.

"Monsieur was meditating a speedy departure," he remarked, sententiously.

His prisoner folded his arms and answered coolly and proudly: "I am Victor, Count d'Olonet. You will find my name on all my belongings. I am about to return to my command in the army."

"Men often travel under assumed names," persisted the *sergeant.* "If you are really not d'Harcourt, perhaps you can tell us where he is. His own room is empty, and he has been seen to go in here. If you are the man we are seeking it was a clever trick to take possession of d'Olonet's effects. If we have made a mistake it will be easy to establish your identity. I repeat it, we shall be obliged to examine your papers."

Resistance being useless, Victor was forced to submit while his pockets were rifled and an exhaustive search was made among his belongings. The officer's quick eye caught sight at once of the

burnt scraps on the table. "That may be bad for you," he remarked. When he found the sealed package his looks betrayed his satisfaction. "Now we shall see," he said. "March."

So Victor was led away a prisoner, but he retained his presence of mind, and did not forget to call out to the *concierge*, who had followed the soldiers, and stood behind them completely bewildered at this unexpected visitation.

"A messenger will come to-day with samples of wine," said d'Olonet. "Tell him what has happened and where they have taken me. If he desires my custom he must call again."

The man promised faithfully, and a moment later Victor had stepped out into the street with his guards. He had done what he could to communicate with Anatole.

He made no opposition to what they told him to do, and he walked on with a firm step and with his head held high. Conscious of his own perfect innocence, he was only annoyed, not alarmed, at what had happened. The day was breaking, and wheels were already heard on the pavement. The milk-venders were abroad, and the wooden rattle of the early waffle-sellers announced to the passing

work-people that a hot mouthful could be bought. The gray and uncertain light of dawn was dying out, and in the east the sky looked rosy. The air was balmy. No one noticed the group hurrying along in the direction of the gloomy prison haunted by sinister memories. Victor was walking so rapidly and so unresistingly that, seeing him in uniform, a passer might have thought him in command rather than in the keeping of that knot of silent men. White blouses passed as the plasterers went by, and not one turned his head; blue blouses and ragged coats went on their way, but their wearers looked on indifferently; bare-headed and aproned women, artisans, and menials hurried along; but none of the quality were out at that early hour. Here and there shutters were being lifted from a shop window; now and again splashing water showed where the sidewalk was being washed. Market-wagons rolled heavily. Flower-women ranged their plants along the *quais* and bridges. The city was waking up. And alone, and in durance, the innocent man was hastened on.

It took but a short time to lead him before the proper authorities, and the necessary for-

malities were quickly disposed of. His name was entered upon the prison register as d'Harcourt's, "*soi-disant* Comte Victor d'Olonet;" and the sun was still low in the sky when he found himself alone and securely locked in a cell.

CHAPTER XIV.

During the hours that followed Victor had plenty of time for reflection, and he tried in vain to understand the web of circumstance that had bound him so surely in its toils. His being clearly a case of mistaken identity, he was less concerned than he might have been, except for the inconvenience of the detention, and he concluded that the mistake had arisen from his close association with Anatole. He never doubted that his own release would be speedily effected. If worst came to the worst, d'Harcourt would surely come to free him. But as he thought of this he shuddered, for he feared that his friend's risk would be great. He dared not think how seriously he might be compromised.

As time went on, his own patience was put to a severe test, for no one came near him. He occupied himself incessantly in trying to piece together half forgotten scraps of conversation, and in doing his best to connect any words or acts of Anatole's that might throw some light upon the mysterious

undertaking that had brought them both into trouble. Victor was in reality more uneasy about the former than he was for himself, but as no solution of the enigma presented itself, he fell at last to thinking exclusively of his own affairs, and of all that had happened to transform his existence.

A lifetime seemed to separate the last months from his former being, and he knew that all the new resolves and the high purposes now welling up within his heart had been prompted by the woman that he loved, and he also knew that it was through her influence that he had learned to discard the frivolities that had once amused him. He thought of her clear gaze and of her gentle smile, and even the desolate cell seemed less lonely when such tender recollections came to keep him company. He did not blame her for having rejected him, but he only found fault with himself for having dared to dream it possible to win a creature so far removed from ordinary mortals as he believed Madeleine to be. And, after all, she had said that she loved him, and the knowledge of that was a recompense for everything.

It seemed wonderful to him that, with her great nature, she had ever stooped to make a friend of a

wild young officer like himself, and that she had admitted him to that blissful companionship. Now that she had confessed her affection, what might not time bring to pass?

Lili, with her bright face and winsome ways, was a joy to look upon; but she was a very child, in spite of her marked talents, petulant and gay—an elusive thing beside her grave, sweet sister.

Then his thoughts reverted to his mother, and he was angry with himself for having delayed an instant to free himself from that old, encumbering engagement. What right had she to fetter him with such bonds? Come what might, he would throw them off. If Madeleine would not relent, he could at least watch her from afar and adore her silently. He did not despair, for he was young and ardent, and he felt that all things were possible. He even fancied himself coming home with an empty sleeve, but with decorations on his breast, and he imagined the pride and affection to be read in her eyes. It seemed to him a better thing to go through life maimed, but blessed with her love, than to live apart and whole. He smiled, and his face glowed, and his eyes grew tender; and then he came to himself with a start—and as he saw

the grim walls frowning down on him, he remembered with a pang the force of character with which Madeleine was wont to carry out her resolutions. With folded arms, and with his head sunk forward on his breast, he paced the stone floor, while his mind changed continually from hope to despair.

He also wondered over Anatole's strange message to Antoinette, though he had not seen her for years. What had he meant? Why had he, in the time of his trouble, turned back to a sweet dream of his youth? But d'Harcourt was right. Antoinette was too sunny and too joyous to link her future to so dark a life as his.

The time passed wearily, and no one came near him but the jailer, who brought him a frugal meal and then departed without a word. All that day and night elapsed without communication with the outer world, and the isolation and uncertainty became intolerable. Had Anatole received the message? Why then had he delayed his coming?

It was not until the third day that Victor was brought to a full realization of his own position. He then learned to his horror that, though his identity had been established, he was held as an

accomplice in a plot to assassinate the Emperor, and that the papers hidden within the folds of old lace and found on his person revealed a traitorous correspondence with the English. His well-known intimacy with d'Harcourt, who was now recognized as the soul of the scheme, was against Victor, and his own position as a soldier of the Empire rendered the case particularly serious;—and until he could clear himself, he was held as one of the principals in the plot. Little by little, a chain of circumstantial evidence had wound itself around him, and he was perilously near to being judged by the clause in the law that proscribed all persons bearing arms against France; and if the verdict of the court was unfavorable, sentence of death might be passed. Aghast at his own terrible position, he was also shocked beyond measure at d'Harcourt's conception of a crime so execrable. Why did he not come to free him; what had caused the delay?

As he lay waiting for his trial, the serene June days ran their course, flooding the city with sunshine, and even piercing his gloomy cell with rays of light. And then, all at once, a tremor of excitement ran through Paris, and for a few days noth-

ing else was talked of. Pichegru, the unfaithful general, had been found dead, strangled, upon the floor of his prison. Sinister murmurs filled the air, and some people looked wise. Was this a suicide, or, had he like d'Enghien, died to insure the Emperor's peace of mind? This suggestion was whispered low, but with many it gained credence. Meanwhile preparations for a great trial were going on, and almost daily arrests of Chouans were made either in Brittany or in Paris, and Cadoudal and Moreau were examined several times. On the 6th of June the examinations of all the accused persons were published, and on the 10th a number were convicted and sentenced to death, though, to the astonishment of every one, the punishment of de Polignac, Moreau, and several others, was commuted to fine and imprisonment. The formidable conspiracy so well known to history, was thus quelled;—but the discovery of d'Harcourt's papers could but add fuel to the flame of justice, and Victor's case was not improved.

Though but little news had penetrated to his cell, d'Olonet had heard enough. Thunderstruck that he should have been suspected of something

as foreign to his nature as to his knowledge, he was still even more indignant than alarmed; but, in spite of everything, he never hesitated as to his own course of action. Anatole would surely come to free him from restraint, and his name from dishonor; and for that he would wait patiently without betraying the hiding-place of his friend. D'Harcourt had saved his life more than once; he had stood beside him in danger and in trouble, and, much as the young officer loathed the crime of which his close companion was more than suspected, he considered that, as the plot had been rendered abortive by the discovery of the papers, his own duty to his country did not require him to deliver his old friend to justice. The consciousness of his own complete innocence upheld him in the trying situation, and he felt such confidence in Anatole's certain course of action that he was actually more concerned for him than he was for himself. He determined, however, that if he were brought to trial he would argue his own cause, and then, in spite of tormenting thoughts, his mind drifted back to Madeleine.

Life was very sweet to the young man. Until he had been deprived of his freedom he had not

known how gladsome it was. He had been stimulated to lead a finer existence, and he now chafed indescribably at his confinement and forced inactivity.

"I must make her proud of me," he cried to the unresponsive walls. "I can, and I will as soon as these purblind officials learn that an innocent man should go as free as air."

His sanguine temperamemt bore him up wonderfully, and kept him hopeful through circumstances that would have caused most men the gravest apprehension. "The accusation is simply preposterous!" he cried—and so, in truth, it was.

In the meantime Madeleine knew nothing of her lover's misfortune. When she had lifted her head from her brother's shoulder after that first passionate outburst in which she had given vent to her feelings after Victor's departure, she knew that she was a changed woman, and that, though she could and would take up her duties once more, the very light of her life had gone out. She arose presently, and as she stood beside Isidore, motionless and erect, she had suddenly grown calm again. Her face was as pale as death, and its sad, patient expression went to his heart, but he knew Made-

leine well, and he saw that the lines of her mouth did not indicate any symptoms of flinching. She placed a cold hand on his and said quietly:

"My brother, all is over. Do not remind me again of the past. It was a beautiful dream."

He knew that the time had not come to argue, so he only returned the pressure of her hand; but the pain on his face was almost as marked as that on her own when she turned and walked silently out of the room. During the days that followed no moan escaped her.

"It is but one thing more," she murmured through her trembling lips as she went about her usual occupations, or else when she knelt alone before the little shrine in her own room. Only within the blessed seclusion of those sheltering walls did she allow herself to give way, and she often remained upon her knees far into the night as she prayed for succor. "Oh, Mother of God," she whispered through her tears, "give me strength to bear it."

Then she schooled herself to fortitude and asked herself with introspective questionings why she had loved him so. The attachment had grown uninvited, and it was clearly a thing against

reason. The difference between their ages alone was enough to make a union impossible. She had meant no harm in lavishing upon him that tender, sisterly solicitude that had developed in spite of herself into something else—and she knew that, after all, it had been their close relations that had kept him out of temptations, and had also wooed him back to life and health. She had never hoped for any result but this, and she had always seen more clearly than he had that their future might not lie in the same direction. Young, brilliant, already high in favor, it seemed madness for Victor to rob himself of advancement that was open to him;—and she, of all persons, was the last one to allow such a mistake. He had not realized what he had demanded or what he was giving up, when, turning his back on all his family traditions, he had asked the lawyer's sister to be his wife. She argued it all out to herself, and she knew that she had acted the part of an honorable woman when she had sent him away. But the pain of it! The rooms looked desolate, and the days seemed barren, in spite of the busy hours. The very sky appeared to have lost its light. To Madeleine, who had been robbed of her

youth and of its rights, the blow came with overpowering force. She had never dreamed that such happiness could enter her life, and had always felt that she lived but for others;—but the precious thing once offered, and then snatched away, had left a blank that could not be filled. It was not until she lost him that she confessed to herself that she loved him with all the depth of her strong nature. At the same moment she had acknowledged and rejected the one romance of her life.

It was extraordinary how his personality was connected with every action of her day. As she passed among the empty pots in the conservatory, she remembered how he had helped her tie up the one remaining vine. When the delicate porcelain cups were handed around, she thought of how he had always carried his to place it on the corner of the high mantel-shelf, having acquired the habit of drinking his tea or chocolate standing, in order that he might look down on her as she sat behind the steaming urn. She did not know that she had made a picture to delight any man's eye as she had presided there in her fresh attire with flowers at her girdle, while her slender white hands were busied among the tea-things, and her head was

poised so that the light lay on her bright locks. To Victor the sight was at once so harmonious and so domestic that he had placed himself where he could see it best. All through the day she was reminded of him in a thousand little ways—and where this sweet companionship had existed, there now remained only a void.

But she neglected none of her usual duties. She was gentle and loving to all about her, untiring in her attention to Isidore's wants, watchful in her care of the boys, and ceaseless in her interest when they came home from the Lycée Louis le Grand; —even patient with Lili in her varying moods. Some women in her position might have turned to the cloister and have sought to busy a wrecked life in the performance of charitable deeds, but Madeleine was not in sympathy with such a train of thought. A busy life in the world seemed to contain more of solace to her. A simple, direct way of doing good, with no ostentation or outward show of livery, suited her pure, strong soul the best. To suffer and to be silent had always been her motto, and now she only blamed herself for not having put a stop to everything long before;— but she prayed constantly and fervently from a

full heart for Victor's happiness. Though he had left her desperately, she did not deceive herself, for she knew well that consolation would surely come to his sunny nature and easily moved affections;—and the strong woman, in the very intensity of her suffering, through her supplications, as well as through the protecting tenderness of her heart, still held before Victor the ægis of her love.

Therefore, she possessed herself with a great patience, and took up her life again quietly, and, except for the pathetic look that lay on her face and showed in her hazel eyes, she gave no sign of what she suffered.

The days were very full, for she was preparing to go to St. Germain, and before the cottage in the country could be opened there were many things to be attended to in Paris. Her plans were changed suddenly, however, for Isidore was unexpectedly called to Lyons on business, and Madeleine and Lili determined to wait a fortnight longer in the city with Gaspard and Réné. Bertrand was much troubled to leave his sister at this time, for he knew well that his companionship and mute sympathy were everything to her. In spite of the great difference in their ages, they had lived

together in such close and understanding intercourse that it was almost forgotten, and the others for whom they had labored seemed only children. It was this very bond, perhaps, that had linked Madeleine so nearly to a brother who might have stood in the relation of a father to her, that had made her estimate her own self at a maturer age than she should have done Now, for almost the first time, they differed in opinion, though he said nothing. He considered Madeleine's sense of honor rather too fine, and, as he heartily liked the young man, he was sorry that she had sent him away. He was also by no means averse to the high connection, for, like most republicans, he had a latent though unacknowledged liking for a title. Now, at the birth of the Empire, such a thing meant a great deal, and it flattered his pride to think that his sister might rank among the old *noblesse.* Man is apt to be inconsistent. But he said nothing, having too high a regard for Madeleine's judgment to even question it, and he knew her far too well to attempt to argue with her. When she had once made up her mind that a thing was right, she was accustomed to do it at whatever personal cost.

It was just at this time that a very strange thing happened to his sister. She was returning one day from a shopping expedition, accompanied by her maid, and she had turned into the Tuileries gardens in order to enjoy a few minutes' rest under the chestnut-trees, for the day was hot, when she became conscious that she was being followed. A young girl with a pretty face, but who looked pale, and whose eyes were undershadowed by heavy lines, kept near, and she persisted in looking at Madeleine in such a way that it made her feel uncomfortable. The child was a stranger to her, but observing her evident distress, the former turned to speak. As she did so, the other fled. A few seconds later, however, she appeared again under the trees, and she still fixed that hungry, anxious look upon the woman she had followed, and as she drew near, Madeleine saw that she had been crying.

"What is the matter?" she asked gently, and at the soft tones of her voice, the girl's shyness vanished and she stood still and did not shrink away.

The gardens were almost deserted, for it was the hour when most persons had returned for the

noon-day meal. One of the keepers passed along the shady alley sweeping the path with his broom made of young twigs. He paid no attention to them. At a little distance a few children played about, watched over by careful maids, and their white dresses made bright spots in the shadow, but there was no one else near. The sparrows chirped and fluttered among the branches or on the ground; the fountains glistened and flashed in the clear air; the sun pierced the roof of foliage and lay in bright patches along the walks, and it shone in undiminished splendor in the open space beyond. From outside the walls of the gardens came the subdued but never ending rumble of traffic that streamed along the great thoroughfare. Thérèse sat a little apart from her mistress and looked displeased when the stranger approached her.

"Oh, lady," whispered Gabrielle, for it was she; and creeping closer, she knelt and caught her hand. "Oh, lady, you, who have so much, can surely afford to be generous. Give him back to me!"

"What do you mean?" asked Madeleine, completely mystified, though touched by the pleading in the low voice.

"I have looked for you day after day," continued

Gabrielle between her sobs. "And my father scolds, my mother even locks me in the house, but I have managed to escape. I cannot find him, and I have been searching for you also, for I meant to pray you to tell me where he is. You are beautiful, you are rich; and I am poor—but I, too, have a heart, and I love him better than my life."

"Whom do you love?" asked Madeleine kindly, and she lay a firm hand on the hot trembling ones. "I do not know your friends, and I would not wrong you in any way if I did."

"M. d'Harcourt—M. le Marquis d'Harcourt," faltered Amand's daughter with a slight inflection of pride in her voice as she dwelt on the name.

Madeleine Bertrand started, but, as the other continued speaking, she said nothing and waited, feeling convinced that she was about to hear a tale of wrong.

"He loves you," sobbed Gabrielle, "but he used to love me. See, he gave me this ring, and he put it on my finger himself, and that means so much! But now he only thinks of you. He stays away whole days at a time, and he has confessed to me that he goes to visit a friend. And after he returns to his room at our inn he shuts himself in,

and at night I can see the light reflected from his window upon the wall on the other side of the street; and it burns so for hours, and I know that he is writing to you. And, lady, I have seen you walking together. I have watched you, and when he spoke you blushed—and his eyes said more than words. But even then he used to come back to the inn, and now he does not return and I do not know where to look for him. He promised to come, but his room remains empty; and I wait and wait, and still I cannot do what he has asked of me for I do not know the way. My father had business this morning in the Rue St. Honoré and he took me with him, but as he stood near the apothecary's shop on the corner, I caught sight of you, and I slipped away and followed you here. Dear lady, tell me where M. d'Harcourt has gone, and I will not care even if my father strikes me when I go home."

"I know nothing of M. d'Harcourt," said Madeleine, quietly, though she was startled at the girl's confession. "He is nothing to me, my child, and I have not seen him for many days. But, my dear, he is not a good friend for you to have. Poor girls should not learn to care for gentle-

men;—and, above all things, they should not follow them about. You must obey your parents and forget him." Her voice had become quite stern.

"But since I have been a child he has loved me, dear lady. This is no new thing. For years he has put up at our inn; and until lately my father has always been pleased when M. d'Harcourt brought me trinkets or other presents."

A great pity filled Madeleine's heart, and her voice softened to a wonderful sweetness as she lay her hand on the bending head. "Poor child," she said, and at the sound of her words Gabrielle buried her face in the other's lap and wept aloud.

Then Madeleine argued with her gently, and tried to show her how dangerous it was for her to allow herself to be so carried away by her feelings. She knew nothing, of course, of the unfulfilled commission that caused the girl such anxiety, but saw that a mystery of some kind existed, and she was full of concern for the young life. As she talked the listener's face grew calmer and she became quiet; and as the realization dawned upon her that Anatole was not Madeleine's lover after all, she felt a blessed relief and she

heard patiently the wise counsels that the speaker gave her.

"Surely you are an angel of light," she said at last, and she kissed Madeleine's hand passionately. "I will go home at once, and I will try to obey my parents and to do as you tell me. I shall light a fresh candle, too, and place it before the Virgin in the church. Perhaps she will send me news of him, and then I can tell him that I have not really been unfaithful. I see now, mademoiselle, that you also are ignorant of his whereabouts. But God bless you, all the same, and may the saints bring happiness to you who have never suffered."

How little she knew!

Madeleine did not answer, but she looked very grave. "What is best for us, will come surely, my child," she said, "and remember that sometimes the greatest love is expressed through renunciation." They were sisters in sorrow, and she longed to help the undisciplined child of the poor. "God protect you from harm, little woman," she went on to say, "and may he keep your life pure and true. Pray for strength to overcome a love that can bring you no good. Some day I shall come to see you."

Gabrielle rose to her feet and threw out her arms dramatically. "It is no use, mademoiselle; —it is fate. But I shall never forget you and your kind words."

Then she darted away like a frightened hare, and ran down the long alley beneath the trees in the direction of the *quai* beyond the garden. Madeleine stood and watched her sadly until she was out of sight, for she remembered the look of desperation in Gabrielle's eyes. With a sigh she turned and beckoned to Thérèse, and then they both took their way home.

CHAPTER XV.

It was soon after the two girls had met in the royal gardens, that Victor's trial took place, but at the time Madeleine knew nothing of it, being even ignorant of his arrest and imprisonment.

The day on which he was brought to the bar to answer for the sins of others was dark and rainy, and the air was so warm that the gloomy court room felt close, appearing in the shadowed light more cheerless than ever. The heavy, soaking showers of early summer bring with them a promise of luxuriance and growth, and on the day in question the moist air was laden with a sweetness borrowed from the parks and blown down the wide stream of the river. As it came through the open windows it should have brought a message of hope.

Victor's confinement had stamped his face with the prison pallor, and its lines of anxiety and trouble made him look older, but his courage had never failed, and when he walked into the room his head was lifted and his step was as firm as

though he were on parade. A murmur of approval greeted him, and looking to the right and to the left, he bowed in silent acknowledgment.

The charges were extremely serious, for his well-known intimacy with d'Harcourt, and the fatal letters found in his own possession, told against him. Then, too, in damaging evidence, it was brought forward that a girl supposed to be a tool of Anatole's and an emissary of his, had been seen hanging about Victor's lodging for days. She had been held and questioned, and though nothing could be extracted from her beyond the frantic desire to find d'Olonet and to communicate with d'Harcourt, her movements had seemed very suspicious. She had talked vaguely, too, of old papers and of valuable lace, but in such contradictory terms that her inquisitors were inclined to think that she was lacking in reason, though her distress at not finding either of the young men was too genuine to be doubted. That she had been a messenger between them was proved conclusively by the discovery of the lace that was wrapped about the papers found on Victor's person; but it was thought likely that she had been unaware of the importance of what she had carried. By

d'Olonet's absolute refusal to divulge his friend's hiding-place he further incriminated himself. Being an officer in the army made his case particularly bad, and as he had held papers dealing with a traitorous understanding with the English, it stamped him at once as one of the plotters in arms against the existing government in France, and it placed his life in jeopardy.

Everything was done to draw from him some information in regard to Anatole, and the latter was considered so dangerous, that freedom was offered to Victor as the price of his friend's betrayal; but d'Olonet was firm. He reasserted his own perfect innocence, but the favorable impression that he had at first produced was gone, and he was listened to with unwilling ears by the baffled and exasperated court, and the result of the trial was practically foreordained. The clemency lately extended to Moreau and the other exempted ones had apparently exhausted executive patience. D'Olonet was only a poor little officer of artillery who had basely betrayed his flag. Why should he receive the slightest mercy?

As the trial progressed, he began to realize the

hopelessness of his case, but holding fast to the belief that his friend would still save him, he never wavered in the course that he had himself adopted.

"Do you not know," he was asked, "that to shield the chief culprit is in itself a crime? To prove your innocence he must be produced, and failing this you are held responsible for what the papers reveal."

"He will come," said Victor quietly. "I execrate the crime that he is charged with, and I am a loyal soldier of the Empire, but the plot has now come to naught and I will not bring my friend to destruction. When he told me where he was, he freely placed his life in my hands. The confidence was unbidden, but I cannot give him up."

"And if he does not return, what will you do?"

"I can die," he answered, simply.

The sun broke through the lifting clouds, and its light shone on the dripping grating of the window, and passing on fell upon the prisoner's head. His eyes looked before him with a sweet steadfastness and his lips never trembled, but his hand, as it lay on the railing before him, tightened in its grasp. The few watchers leaned forward, strain-

ing their ears in the intensity of their listening,—and the case proceeded.

It did not take long. Various forms were gone through; a formal charge was given, and at last, just as had been expected, the word of doom was spoken, but as it fell from the lips of the presiding officer, a murmur of pity and of sympathy ran through the room. Victor looked so young and so brave that all were touched, and there was something in the gaze of his straightforward eyes that told more than one heart that the accused was guiltless.

Through a quiet that could be almost felt, the words were spoken, and as the prisoner heard them every drop of blood drained from his face, though he still held his head erect and his pose was unchanged. Life, hope, everything was over, unless Anatole came, but he looked directly into the judge's eyes and did not move when he heard his sentence. The silence was oppressive. Even the scratching of pens and the rustling of papers had ceased, but the flies buzzed through the heated atmosphere, and drops of rain, that came from a leaking gutter above, fell in staccato touches on the stone window-sill; and that piercing ray of

light still fell on the proudly lifted head and white face.

"You are condemned," said the judge, "to be shot as a traitor at the next sunrise but one. May God have mercy on your soul. Amen."

"Amen," repeated Victor;—and "Amen," muttered the court. They felt that he ought to die, but they knew that he was a brave man.

He was led away amid the same death-like silence, and there was hardly a dry eye in the room.

. . . . . .

When he found himself once more in his cell and alone, he sat down to think of all that there remained for him to do. Strange to say, his nerves were so highly strung by the excitement of the trial that for some time the details were blotted from his mind.

He was to die. He kept repeating the words to make himself believe them. He felt his own warm hands and tried to understand that in a few short hours they would be cold and stiff. He noticed the genial sunshine, and he thought of the trees and flowers that he should never see again but that would go on blooming just the same. A bird flew by his narrow window, singing, and the

clear, ringing note of freedom pierced the young man's heart. Then he broke down. "Ah, little messenger, can you not carry a word from me to the outer world;—to Anatole, whose perfidy lets me remain here to die;—to my mother and to my sister Antoinette;—to Madeleine, ah, Madeleine!

"Why does not Anatole come? By this time he surely knows what has happened, for he was waiting for my answer and the messenger must have been true. Is a traitor, after all, worth this sacrifice that I am making? But he saved my life, not once but twice; and when I was alone and ill he watched beside me night and day until my bright angel came. He will not, he cannot, desert me now. I will have patience, and I will still trust, for did he not write that he loved me better than his life? It is so good to live! The world is so fair, and Madeleine is there, ah, God!" .

His first impulse had been to write to his mother, and then to his love, acquainting them both with his fate; but on questioning the jailer, he only received a tardy assurance that his letters could be expedited on the following day after the authorities had satisfied themselves that they con-

tained no treasonable matter; and with this he was forced to content himself.

"So that I may have Madeleine's prayers at the last if deliverance does not come," he murmured. "At least, *bon Dieu*, grant me that. My mother cannot know until all is over, and when she does her heart will break."

But while fate was apparently so hard, an unexpected agency was at work to bring him comfort.

From the very first Thérèse, the maid, had viewed Victor's unexplained departure with suspicion. No word had been said to her, but she guessed shrewdly enough at what had happened, and her heart was sore for her young mistress that she dearly loved; and when more than a week had elapsed since she had opened the door for their once constant visitor, she became uneasy. Madeleine's pale face pained her. Even Lili and the boys were awed into a respectful silence, and the former ceased her teasing and was more than usually affectionate to her sister. She asked no questions, for she felt that Madeleine's reserve was sacred. Curiosity, however, got the better of her at last, and she and the faithful servant discussed the matter freely when her sister was not by.

Encouraged and urged on by Lili, Thérèse at last determined to find out what had become of Victor, who, it seemed, had turned recreant.

The way to the market led past his door, and one morning, soon after Isidore had left Paris by the Lyons coach, the woman, impelled by an indefinable premonition of coming evil, actually rang d'Olonet's bell, in order to gossip with the *concierge*, who was well known to her since the days of the officer's illness.

The wiry, wizen-faced door-keeper looked out, and then pulled the cord.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Thérèse," he said, "come in, come in. It is doubtless news of that poor young man that you seek. I cannot yet believe that he was so wicked, for his face was kind, and he always had a good word for every one. Come in, come in; my wife will be enchanted to see you." He raised his voice and called shrilly to his spouse: "Come then, my dear, and tell Mademoiselle Thérèse the sad news of our lamented lodger. *Mon Dieu, que c'est dur*, that he must be shot as a traitor!"

His visitor was stupefied at this news of terrible import, for she had expected nothing so seri-

ous; but she kept her wits about her and managed to draw out by degrees the story of his arrest, which was told eagerly, but with such frequent embellishments of conjectures and regrets that it was difficult to obtain the actual facts. Thérèse also learned that the *concierge* had hung about the jail where Victor was confined, and had picked up an impression of how matters stood. No great mention of the affair had appeared in the papers, for the fate of a plotter, more or less, at this time was simply merged in the news that chronicled the end of the great conspiracy. Since Bertrand's departure the daily prints had come with irregularity to his house, and no one had read of what had happened. When Thérèse had gleaned all that it was possible to find out, she hastened home to tell her mistress, but how imminent the danger was she did not know.

She found the sisters sitting together, sewing. Lili occupied a bench at Madeleine's feet, and the embroidery that she should have been busy upon lay unfinished in her hand, as she rested her head on the other's knee. Her pastels and drawing-board stood invitingly near, but she had deserted her cherished work in order to bear this loved sis-

ter company. Her own heart was full of the latter's woe, and she could not understand her silence. She wished that Madeleine would cry and lament now that her lover had gone. It would make things so much easier, for then one could speak about it, and it was what she would have done herself had she been unhappy. To be sure Lili was having a constant stream of rejected lovers, and she had "broken her heart" many times. This had been Madeleine's only love, so things were different after all.

Thérèse should have undoubtedly broken her news gently, but she was so excited that she forgot her usual tact, and burst into the drawing-room, and positively exploded with her fearful tale.

When Madeleine looked up to receive this report, it was with such a startled expression of grief and terror that the maid thought the news would kill her. She clasped her hands over her heart and gasped, as the color left her face, and her eyes filled with such a look of unutterable woe that her old nurse, and her little sister, were frightened.

Lili burst out into passionate and indignant

wailing, but falling on her knees she took Madeleine's hands within her own and gently chafed and kissed them, while Thérèse stood over her and crooned in a low voice, counselling courage, and assuring her blindly and unreasonably that all would yet go well.

Madeleine hardly heard the kind words. She did not even notice what they were doing to her, and only caught at her breath painfully in her effort to regain composure. Freeing her hands at last, she pushed back the mass of hair that had fallen over her forehead, and then, breaking down for a moment longer, she buried her face in her palms as she moaned: "It was I that sent him away, and now I am not near him." She shook with the suppressed sobs that are so much more pitiful to witness than a more tearful grief;—but after a few seconds she recovered herself, and rose to her feet, saying with the quietness and strength of a great courage: "This is no time for weeping. We must act."

"What can be done?" groaned Lili.

"I must do it alone," replied her sister, quietly, but in a voice that the younger girl never forgot. "Isidore is away, and you and Thérèse are all I

have to depend upon. There is not a moment to lose. Victor is innocent of this fearful crime, and is accused of it through some mistake. Now we must save him."

"But how?" faltered the maid. "You have no proof. If the trial has already taken place, it is hopeless, mademoiselle."

"Then I shall go to the Emperor!"

With the calmness of despair, the women set out to endeavor to obtain more definite news of the young man, and to send him at least a message of comfort. They hurried along, the two sisters clinging to each other, Lili trembling, but the other almost cold in the strong quiet of her desperation; and the servant who followed close behind them, perturbed and anxious, with her good-natured face flushed with anger as she forcibly repressed the vociferations that only troubled her mistress.

It was not long before what she had reported was confirmed; and when Madeleine learned that he had been already tried by court-martial, and that he was to be shot at sunrise the following morning, the news hardly came to her as a surprise, for she had nerved herself to hear anything.

She was not permitted to see him or even to send him a message.

"Has he seen a priest?" she asked, and when they said "No," she tore from her dress the roses that she wore. "Give them to him," she said, "and tell him that a confessor shall be sent to-night."

The jailer hesitated as the commanding-looking woman held the flowers out to him. "It is against the rules, mademoiselle," he said.

"Take them," she repeated imperiously. "I send no other message;—I ask no other favor."

"Why should I do this thing for you? It may cost me my place."

"Because," she answered, simply, "I love him."

The rough man thought that he had never seen any one so lovely before, as he looked at her sweet face crowned by waving masses of chestnut hair, while her candid eyes shone with the fervor of a saint's. There was that about her at once so pure and so enthralling that he could only do as he was bid. He raised his cap respectfully, and he took the flowers.

"Surely, you must be his guardian angel, lady. He shall have the roses."

Then Madeleine turned and walked away with her companions, and as they hastened on, she announced that she and Lili would start for St. Cloud without an instant's delay beyond what was necessary to obtain the fastest pair of horses that the livery-stable could produce, to carry them in a post-chaise to the imperial abiding-place beyond the city. There she would endeavor to present a petition to the Emperor. Thérèse was too much stunned at this tremendous resolution, and Lili too absolutely frightened, to make the slightest objection; and both followed her will submissively. At last all was ready; and as the postilion cracked his whip when they started, Madeleine began to realize for the first time the difficulties of what she had undertaken.

It was indeed the only hope that remained; and she determined that she would throw herself entirely on the great man's mercy. If she might approach him in no other way, she would wait at the gates of the palace with her petition; and when he drove forth she would fall on her knees and plead at least for time. Could she but obtain a respite, she felt sure that her brother with all his cleverness might help her on his return.

Consequently the horses were urged forward until they were covered with foam, and she sat in the carriage almost rigid in her grief, and yet with every sense keenly alive. She had taken no thought of her appearance, and still wore her gray morning-gown that had become disordered, and her glorious locks fell loosely from their heavy coils and lay in bright masses on her shoulders and about her face. Her eyes had the brilliancy of fever, and her soft white hands were clasped so firmly together that she never noticed that her nails actually left their impress on them. The nervous strain was intense, and the awful dread that caused Lili to cower back against the cushions gave to Madeleine a look of inspiration that, her faithful servant declared afterward, had made her appear like one of the blessed martyrs.

Thérèse stood on the sidewalk to see them off, her mind filled with many misgivings; and then she returned to the house. The boys would soon be at home, and she would be forced to explain their sisters' errand. As the old woman busied herself with her work, her fingers trembled, and her eyes grew dim. She would have gladly given

ten years of her life to have accompanied and protected her young ladies.

As the carriage bowled on its way, Madeleine's mind worked continually, but Lili was petrified at the bare thought of appearing before the Emperor. Her sister's act was, to her, one of supremest daring. That was a fearful drive. It was more like the hunted flight experienced sometimes in a nightmare than an actual reality; and the fearful suspense made even their rapid course seem slow. Trees and houses flashed past, dust encircled the vehicle, the horses' feet sounded regularly, the postilion's voice urged them on. When they left the streets and passed out on the open way, their speed increased. On they flew to the utmost capacity of the animals' endurance, for Victor's life was at stake!

It was with deep thankfulness that the sisters learned, upon their arrival at St. Cloud, that Napoleon had not yet driven forth; and they hastened to station themselves at the gate of the park, so that they might intercept him as he went by. They stood among a group of people who waited to see the popular hero. Lili clung to Madeleine's arm with a grasp that was painful, and incessantly

invoked the Virgin and the saints, but her sister only smiled. "Do not fear," she said gently. "My love is as true as steel, and he is also innocent. Heaven will not desert us."

Napoleon appeared at last in his carriage, attended by an escort, and, as the *cortège* passed slowly out of the gate, he looked toward the gaping people. Their adulation pleased him. Madeleine was sufficiently conspicuous by reason of her unusual coloring and her dishevelled appearance to have attracted his notice, even had she not been accompanied by the pretty, weeping girl, who in spite of her grief had remembered to dress herself charmingly before leaving home. One does not meet the Emperor every day. But though Lili's sobs had caught his ear, it was on the older woman that his eyes had fallen with quick appreciation, even before she fell on her knees crying, "A petition, Sire!"

He motioned to an aide, and the carriage was stopped. The people strained forward to listen, and Madeleine's heart almost ceased beating as she heard the words: "Who are you, madam, and what do you desire?"

At any other time her blood would have boiled

at his impertinent stare, for Bonaparte's coarse admiration for beautiful women was well known, and often intolerable; but now she was oblivious of self, and rose quickly to approach the door of his conveyance, saying in a low voice: "All power is in your hands, Sire. I only beg for mercy."

"And by Heaven! what is it that you want? Let it be anything but grace for one of those accursed conspirators."

"Justice tempered with mercy is one of the most august attributes of Majesty," she said boldly. "I ask for clemency for one whom I hope to prove innocent."

She looked at him bravely, and for the first time a faint tinge of color came into her face. She still held the paper as she waited.

"By my faith, you have courage. Suppliants are not apt to dictate when they ask for mercy." His voice was stern, but his eye rested approvingly on her, and his gaze was less insolent when he spoke again. "But you are beautiful enough, madam, for me to forgive your presumption. Give me your paper."

Instead of keeping it for future attention, the

great man unfolded the sheet at once. Madeleine had hardly hoped for this.

There was a moment of breathless suspense. The summer breeze rustled caressingly through the trees, and the June sky above was as pure and smiling as though it only looked down on peace and joy, and not upon a breaking heart. Madeleine stood like a statue in her place. Her hands were clasped with desperate firmness, and she did not notice that the wind blew her locks about her face—but as the light fell on them, they glistened like Danae's gold, and all who saw them wondered. With her head bent slightly forward, and with her whole soul looking out of her eyes as she fastened them on the arbitrator of Victor's fate, and with parted lips, she waited. Lili knelt behind her on the turf and watched with uplifted, imploring gaze.

Napoleon glanced at the paper and frowned. "Another one of the brood to be stamped out," he said. "Who are you?" he added roughly, "that you have a right to ask this thing? Why should I spare this d'Olonet?"

"Because, Sire, he is a loyal and an innocent man. I pledge my word for it, and I hope to

prove it if time is granted. There has been a frightful mistake. The d'Olonets have always been brave and true,—besides——"

"And besides?" asked the Emperor gravely as he fixed his penetrating eyes upon her.

"Besides, I love him." It was the second time that day that she had used the same words, and now also they had their effect.

"Mademoiselle," said Napoleon, "both for your goodness and for your beauty you deserve to be happy. We wish that we could grant your prayer unconditionally, but even you will allow that our authority must be sustained; and were such conspirators to go unpunished, the Empire itself would be in peril. Such clemency as we have to bestow is yours. The case is well known to me, and I cannot doubt d'Olonet's participation in the plot. His fate is sealed and to-morrow morning he is to die; but we will give him one more chance. If he will deliver to us the leader of the plot, his own freedom is assured. This he has already refused to do, but should he reconsider his decision at the last moment even, he shall be restored to your arms. A courier shall ride at once to Paris with these orders. On your own return

you shall visit your lover in his cell. See that you reason with him effectually, but remember that if our offer is refused again, the law goes into effect. *En avant!*"

He sank back in his seat, and as the postilions touched the horses with their cracking whips, he heard her bell-like voice repeating:

"Sire, the d'Olonets have always been both brave and true!"

Back to the great city over the dusty roads, back to her home with a sorrow in her heart that was too deep for utterance, though a superhuman courage filled her heart. That was all that there was left for Madeleine to do, and as she and Lili were hastened back over the way they had come, she counted each one of the precious moments as they passed from Victor's last day on earth, for she told herself proudly that he would never betray his trust. She did not yet clearly understand all the details of the affair, but she knew that his life hung upon his own word and that he would not reveal what had been confided to him. She believed in him absolutely, and she knew that he was incapable of any act that could reflect upon his stainless honor. Hope was over, and she must

now help him through the last terrible ordeal, and then,—ah, well, then she would live out her widowed life, dwelling ever on the recollection of the past, and thanking God always for the blessed happiness of a few short weeks.

It was late when they at last reached Paris, and they heard the horses' feet clatter over the pavement. The street lamps burned fitfully, and the lack of moon made the night dark. Overcome with excitement, Lili lay back exhausted in the carriage, and could with difficulty be aroused when they reached their destination; but Madeleine's faculties had never been clearer, and she went about what she had to do, quickly, though with a set, white face. Victor's letter awaited her, and for the first time she learned clearly and in detail of what he was accused. She sat motionless beside the table thinking, and the lamp-light showed the firm, clear characters that were indicative of a hand that had not trembled. At first, as she read, her soul was filled with abhorrence for d'Harcourt, but Victor's words, "He has saved my life, and, if possible, he will yet come," touched her, and she paused to consider. Each second of time was of priceless worth, but reflection

might save much in the end. As the only reward of her careful patience came the remembrance of her meeting with Gabrielle, and she thought of the latter's frantic search for d'Harcourt. Completely mystified, her old shrinking returned with intensified force, and she told herself that he would not come.

CHAPTER XVI.

VICTOR remained in a state of shock and bewilderment on the day we left him, though his main purpose was unchanged. Uppermost in his thoughts was the remembrance of his mother and Madeleine, but he had not the consolation of knowing whether his first letters had gone. He sat down and tried to write again, his best comfort being to bring himself into communication with those he loved so dearly. The soft air wafting through his bars was laden with the sweetness of early summer, and he thought longingly of the freedom of the beautiful world without his prison. Was Madeleine at home, or was she already in the charming retreat beside the forest? Where would his letter find her? Was she thinking of him? His heart beat wildly. His blood was young and warm, and it flowed through his veins with eager strength. Had he been only saved from his long illness and from a reckless life to succumb to a terrible fate? The scalding tears rushed to his

eyes as he folded his arms on the table and leaned his head upon them.

A creaking of the door at last caused him to look up, and his jailer entered to place before him a bunch of blood-red roses.

"A message from Madeleine," d'Olonet murmured, and he pressed them to his lips and listened while the man told him how they had been left by a young lady who had given no name. "She was tall and very pale, and her hair had shone like a glory when the light touched it, and her eyes were clear as a mountain brook."

"Madeleine, Madeleine," whispered the poor prisoner, "you have helped me to live; now you shall teach me how to die."

As the day wore on he wrote to her and to his mother, and he passed the hours as men are wont to pass them when they know that they are their last on earth. But one interruption came. This was when the officer entered late in the day, bringing the final proposal of which the Emperor had spoken; but he gave no hint of Madeleine's intercession. This brought back all Victor's strength again, and he absolutely refused to listen. "You ask of me my friend's life as the price of my own,"

he said. "That can never be. Now that I know his crime, I loathe it, but I cannot betray him. *Vive l'Empereur!*"

He folded his arms and leaned against the wall of his cell.

"These are not the days of Dionysius," said the messenger persuasively. "Damon waits, but Pythias will not come. Think again."

But d'Olonet only shook his head. "I can trust him," he replied.

"You are a noble friend," said the officer, "a veritable Bayard for chivalry. D'Harcourt is not worth the sacrifice. Monsieur, I salute you!" Raising his hand to his head he departed.

Left to himself once more, the prisoner paced the floor incessantly as he thought and waited, oppressed and crushed by the terrible strain he was undergoing, though he was still upheld by a Heaven-sent strength. It must have been with some such spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion that martyrs went to the stake of old. When the light faded away, he threw himself on his cot. The confessor was to come at midnight, and Victor meant to rest until then. Exhausted by all he had gone through, he sank into a troubled sleep,

but when he heard the door open once more, he started into instant wakefulness and rose to his feet.

He could hardly believe his own eyes when the portal swung back heavily on its hinges, and he saw behind the venerable priest who entered in advance, two women following him. They wore long, dark cloaks, and their heads were bent. The wild hope that sprang into d'Olonet's heart at that instant made it stand still. What he fancied he saw was so unexpected that he staggered and placed his hand on the table behind him for support. As the taller of the advancing figures came within the range of the light that streamed from the lantern held high by the guard who accompanied the party, Victor perceived that it was indeed his beloved Madeleine who had come; and her features, pure and strong as an angel's, were lighted up with a faith that was unquenchable as they were turned toward him. "Was it a dream?" he asked himself in that first second of glad surprise; but the next instant he was holding her in his arms, and he felt her warm kisses on his face, and he was conscious of the tender hands that stroked back his hair, and he heard the gen-

tle voice that whispered: "I have come to you, my love, my life, never to leave you again."

At first she did not even seem to notice how haggard and worn he had become; they simply clung together in the ecstasy of their reunion, and she caressed and soothed him, and he held her in an embrace that knew no parting.

At last he turned respectfully to greet the father who accompanied her, and to extend a word of greeting to Lili, who looked heart-broken, and who murmured incoherent assurances of her faith in Victor, and begged his forgiveness for her tormenting ways.

"Child, you did not understand," he said gently. He felt as though he were older than she by a whole lifetime.

Then Madeleine went on to say softly: "Listen to me, Victor, for each moment is precious. I am here now to stay with you until the end. I have won the Emperor's permission to do so. Afterward, I shall carry my great love for you in this poor heart of mine until life shall cease. Make me your wife, my beloved. Good Father Eustace will join us together in the holy sacrament of marriage to-night. Then I shall have a right to

mourn for you as I will; and I can also go to your mother, and tell her all, and comfort her. Surely she will forgive me when we weep together. After that I shall wait with longing for death to come and free me so that I may join you in Paradise."

They both fell on their knees before the advancing priest, and Victor exclaimed:

"Madeleine, you have made death almost welcome!"

The solemn night passed away. Humble confession, absolution bestowed, and the administration of the last rites of the Church, marked its hours; but before the final sacred offices took place, that strange, sad ceremony of marriage was performed within the very shadow of the valley of death.

Had such a scene ever been witnessed before? The venerable man leaned over the young people as he joined them together on the brink of the grave, and his eyes grew tender, and his voice trembled, as he spoke the solemn consecrating words that made them one. Lili knelt beside her sister and murmured an awe-struck "Amen;" and even the guards uncovered their heads and wiped

their eyes. Victor stood calmly beside his bride, and his hand was perfectly steady when he placed his own ring upon her finger; but her strength began to fail her at last and she leaned against him for support, and was glad when his protecting arm closed around her. The stone-floored cell was but dimly lighted by the solitary lantern, as the patriarchal priest bent over the two young creatures whose deathly pallor and intensely moved faces he never forgot. The man's was full of strength, the woman's of absolute trust. In the imperfect light the guards filled up the background of the pathetic picture with their strong lines; and, crushed and broken like a drooping flower, Lili sank lower as she knelt, and lifted up a pitiful, appealing countenance as she joined in the prayers. The words fell slowly from the father's lips, and each syllable rang with a note of help and comfort to the sorely tried hearts, and each vow set a seal upon a love that could not die. When all was over, Victor lifted his wife from her knees and clasped her in his embrace before he placed her hand in Lili's.

"Little sister," he said, "be good to her always. I leave her to you as a precious legacy."

The religious duties all performed, he led Madeleine at last to the window, and pointed to where the first faint streak of morning showed in the east.

"It is nearly time," he whispered, "but I fear nothing."

Hand in hand they sat upon his narrow bed and waited, waited as the loud ticking of his watch told of the passing time, waited as the light on the floor broadened and the gloom of night disappeared, waited as the distant sounds through the long corridors told of the coming day. The father still knelt before an improvised altar and repeated his prayers; and Victor's eyes were fixed on the crucifix and his lips moved, but he held Madeleine's hand firmly in his own, and he listened to her dear voice as at intervals she whispered words of love and of courage, and hope in the world beyond. Not a tear was shed, not a faltering word was spoken. Even Lili remained silent, struck dumb by her grief.

Broader and brighter became the light, and approaching, resounding steps gave warning that the hour had come.

In a moment the door was opened quickly, and

the newly united couple rose to their feet, while Victor threw his strong arm about his wife whose head rested on his shoulder; and both waited, pale, and calm, and firm.

The priest's entreating voice was heard: "From sin and sorrow, and from an unbelieving death: good Lord, deliver them!"

But instead of a dreary party of jailers and assistants, an officer booted and spurred, and dusty from a hurried ride, entered with the guard. Flecks of foam from his horse still lay undried upon his uniform, and he was flushed with the violent exercise when he was ushered in.

"Monsieur le Comte d'Olonet!" he cried in a ringing voice that the stone walls caught and flung back again in joyous utterance:

"Monsieur le Comte d'Olonet, I bring you your release. D'Harcourt has given himself up!"

Then Madeleine reeled and fainted dead away.

. . . . . .

Joy never kills. When the glad morning sun was high in the heavens and the light of a glorious day shone over Paris, Madeleine found herself safely seated in the conservatory at home beneath the red rose-vine; and beside her stood her hus-

band with a new-born earnestness in his face; and as he laid his hand upon her shining hair, he said gravely:

"Our real life is but just beginning, Madeleine. We must always keep it brave and true."

Beyond, in the drawing-room, Lili, in the exuberance of her joy and her relief, played a triumphant march upon the harpsichord, but the others' happiness was too chastened a one for such demonstrations, and the sound only jarred upon them.

The one drawback to the bliss before them lay in the knowledge of Anatole's fate, for, in spite of all, Victor loved him. They heard afterwards that when it came, he died as he had lived, recklessly, but bravely. In the full conviction of the righteousness of his cause, he went to his doom as though martyred. When his eyes were to be bound, he refused to have it done. "I am not afraid to look death in the face," he said.

So perished one of the old race. As its representative he showed a strange mixture of vice and of bravery, as well as of qualities that under happier circumstances might have been trained into

virtues. To the last he was a Royalist and a gentleman. *Requiescat in pace.*

. . . . . .

One morning shortly after his execution, the body of a young girl was drawn from the Seine. She was almost a child in appearance, but life to her had already lost its charm. Within her dress was found a seal-ring bearing the d'Olonet arms, and it lay over her heart. It was Antoinette's pledge to Anatole, and his to the inn-keeper's daughter, but no one knew it.

"*Tiens!*" remarked a passer as he paused to look at the white face. "This is Gabrielle, the child of Gourtain of the *Sapin Vert!* What can have brought her to such an end?"

"I know," replied another sagely as he held up the ring. "This comes of playing with gentlemen who mean no good to a poor girl. She has died of grief!"

"The ring is of evil omen," said the first, and seizing it, he flung it far out into the river, and as it disappeared from sight the last trace of Anatole's plot vanished.

THE END.

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